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Oranges & Lemons. The Rhyme and  
the Churches.

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*ORANGES AND LEMONS*

GLADYS TAYLOR has also written

*Old Gardens of London*

*London Squares* (in preparation)





*Two monks playing bells with hammers*  
(Worms Bible, 1148)

GLADYS TAYLOR

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# ORANGES & LEMONS

THE RHYME AND THE  
CHURCHES

WITH LINE DRAWINGS BY H. WEISSENBORN



PETER NEVILL

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To  
THE ANCIENT SOCIETY OF  
COLLEGE YOUTHS  
*Who have rung the Bells  
of London Town  
since 1637*

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I have been unable to get into touch with Mr. Harold Adshead, but am grateful for his poem, *On Passing St. Clement Danes*.

G. T.



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*Part I*

*The Background*

# ORANGES AND LEMONS

Arranged by Gladys  
Taylor, and copyright.

Gaily

"Or-an-ges and le-m-ons," Say the bells of Saint Clem-ent's; "Cull's eyes and kargals," Say the

bells of Saint Mary's. "Brick-bats and Kites," Say the bells of Saint  
like clashing bells

Giles; "Half-pence and far-things," Say the bells of Saint Mary's. repeat as often as necessary

Here comes a can-dle to light you to bed, And here comes a  
like talking bells

chop-per to chop off your head. Last, last, last, last! ..... man's head.  
as many times as required

## ORANGES AND LEMONS

(long version)

*Gay go up and gay go down  
To ring the bells of London Town.*

*Oranges and lemons,  
Say the bells of St. Clement's.*

*Bulls'-eyes and targets,  
Say the bells of St. Marg'ret's.*

*Brickbats and tiles,  
Say the bells of St. Giles.*

*Halfpence and farthings,  
Say the bells of St. Martin's.*

*Pancakes and fritters,  
Say the bells of St. Peter's.*

*Two sticks and an apple,  
Say the bells of Whitechapel.*

*Poker and tongs,  
Say the bells of St. John's.*

*Kettles and pans,  
Say the bells of St. Ann's.*

*Old Father Baldpate,  
Say the slow bells of Aldgate.*

*You owe me ten shillings,  
Say the bells of St. Helen's.*

*When will you pay me?  
Say the bells of Old Bailey.*

*When I grow rich,  
Say the bells of Shoreditch.*

*Pray when will that be?  
Say the bells of Stepney.*

*I'm sure I don't know,  
Says the great bell of Bow.*

*Gay go up and gay go down  
To ring the bells of London Town.*

## ORANGES AND LEMONS

(short version)

*Oranges and lemons,  
Say the bells of St. Clement's;  
You owe me five farthings,  
Say the bells of St. Martin's;  
When will you pay me?  
Say the bells of Old Bailey;  
When I grow rich,  
Say the bells of Shoreditch;  
When will that be?  
Say the bells of Stepney;  
I do not know,  
Says the big bell of Bow.  
Here comes a candle to light you to bed,  
Here comes a chopper to chop off your head;  
The last, last, last, last, last man's head.*



*Gay go up and gay go down*

DIGGING up the past is always a fascinating adventure: you never know what you may find! And whether you unearth pots or paving, mummies or manuscripts, or even, by delving into dusty tomes, extract some scrap of forgotten knowledge, there is always the excitement of treasure trove. Something has been discovered. Another link has been forged between the past and the present.

So it is with "Oranges and Lemons." The rhyme is very old indeed: its origin is lost in the mists of antiquity. But as we try to penetrate those mists old forgotten things come to light like bright bits of mosaic. Some are richly coloured, some are faded and chipped. Sometimes they form a little pattern, sometimes they refuse to fit in anywhere; but what does it matter? The coloured fragments are pretty in themselves.

The rhyme, with the passing centuries, has gathered to itself all kinds of associations—with churches, their history and treasures; with bells, their makers and ringers; with a motley throng of priests, architects, artists and musicians; associations of beauty and horror. It has brought mediæval life close to life today, and has amassed a store of legends.

## *Oranges and Lemons*

Nobody knows when or how the rhyme began. Similar lines of doggerel are found up and down the country. Shropshire has a particularly long jingle beginning:

A knot and a kernel  
Say the bells of Acton Burnell.

And one Derbyshire bell song runs:

Ding dong for Timington!  
Ten bells at Birmingham,  
Two slippers and a trash,  
Say the bells at Moneyash.  
We'll ring 'em down,  
Say the bells of Tideswell town,  
(or Taddington)  
We'll ring a merry peal,  
Say the bells of Bakewell.\*

The idea of making rhyming couplets to fit bell-notes probably originated in our usual desire to translate into human speech sounds that are non-human. Just as we have fitted phrases to the songs of birds—the thrush's "Stick-to-it, stick-to-it," the yellow-hammer's "Little-bit-of-bread-and-no-cheese," the wood-pigeon's "Tak'-two-coos-Taffy-tak'-twoo-oo"—so the chiming of bells may have suggested word-sequences. Whether they made sense was of no importance; the sing-song of the syllables was satisfying. And if by chance they did make sense and contain some germ of truth, so much the better. There was a legend that the bells of St. Giles, Cripplegate, formerly sounded like the brick-bats and tiles attributed to them in the rhyme; but this may have been a base libel.

\* Ernest Morris, *Legends of the Bells*. Sampson Low, Marston & Co.

## Oranges and Lemons

The rhymes up and down the country show the influence of different places, and judging by the parish names London definitely seems to be the native home of "Oranges and Lemons"; indeed, the version given in *Gammer Gurton's Garland* (1810) is entitled "The Merry Bells of London Town," and begins with the couplet,

Gay go up and gay go down  
To ring the bells of London Town.

This, however, is not the earliest record. In the third edition of *Playford's Dancing Master* (1665) "Oringes and Lemons" appeared as the name of a square-for-eight dance; but the rhyme itself was first printed in 1744, in *Tom Thumb's Pretty Song Book, Voll. II*. This publication, the earliest known book of nursery rhymes, was only 3 inches by 1 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches in size, and was "Sold by Mr. Cooper According to Act of Parliam(ent)." The tiny chap-book was sold for a few pence; but who can estimate the value today of the sole surviving copy of "Voll. II" now in the British Museum?

The rhyme has not changed appreciably in the past two hundred years. In its first printed version it appeared as:

Two Sticks and Apple,  
Ring y<sup>e</sup> Bells at Whitechapple,  
Old Father Bald Pate,  
Ring y<sup>e</sup> Bells Aldgate,  
Maids in white Aprons,  
Ring y<sup>e</sup> Bells a S<sup>t</sup>. Catherines,  
Oranges and Lemmons,  
Ring y<sup>e</sup> Bells at S<sup>t</sup>. Clemens,  
When will you pay me,  
Ring y<sup>e</sup> Bells at y<sup>e</sup> Old Bailey,

## *Oranges and Lemons*

When I am rich,  
Ring y<sup>e</sup> Bells at Fleetditch,  
When will that be,  
Ring y<sup>e</sup> Bells at Stepney,  
When I am old,  
Ring y<sup>e</sup> Bells at Pauls.

Other variants appeared in 1760, 1788, 1805 and 1810. The maids in white aprons vanished, Bow took the place of Pauls, Fleetditch gave way to Shoreditch, other churches crept into the rhyme. And in 1874 the words, with the music, were included in the *Baby's Opera*, illustrated by Walter Crane. At first there was no undue stress on oranges and lemons; in the versions of 1760 and 1805 that couplet does not even appear. But later on the two churches of St. Clement, Eastcheap, and St. Clement Danes both claimed to be closely associated with the rhyme, and at the latter this association of "Oranges and Lemons" with the church was cultivated for many years before the war, so that finally St. Clement Danes was identified with the rhyme in the popular mind.

Both churches have some foundation for their claim. Long ago, when the Thames was more used as a thoroughfare, citrus fruits from the Mediterranean that came to London by ship were unloaded below the bridge and then taken in barges to the quays higher up the river. Some fruit would go to the big market in Eastcheap, some would be carried by porters to Clare Market. Part of their route lay through Clement's Inn, and at one time a toll was levied and divided among the tenants of the Inn who were inconvenienced by the passing through of

## *Oranges and Lemons*

the porters. This gave rise to a pleasant custom. Annually, on New Year's Day, each tenant was expected to give half a crown to the porters, and was in his turn presented with an orange.

The study of nursery rhymes is most intriguing. The majority of them were not compiled for the young, but originated as lampoons and skits, fragments of folk songs (as "One misty moisty morning"), prayers ("Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, Bless the bed that I lie on"), tavern songs, proverbs, songs of war and rebellion—in fact, anything that pertained to the life of the people. Among the best-known squibs are: "Mary, Mary, quite contrary," who was Mary Tudor. The silver bells were the sacring bells of the mass; "cockleshells" represented the insignia of pilgrims; and "pretty maids all in a row" were nuns. "Little Jack Horner" was an abbot of Glastonbury who at the Dissolution contrived to secure for himself a veritable plum—the manor and church of Mells, one of the loveliest small estates in Somerset. "Lucy Locket" and Kitty Fisher were celebrated courtesans in the time of Charles II. So we might continue through history. The children of Stuart and early Hanoverian days were expected to be replicas of adults in understanding as well as in costume. They heard and sang these songs, often without grasping their meaning, but in the demanding way of childhood insisting on exact repetition of words and music. In this way the rhymes were faithfully preserved and handed down orally long after their original significance was forgotten.

## *Oranges and Lemons*

Both versions of "Oranges and Lemons," the long and the short, are authentic. "Gay go up" seems to have been used for a round game resembling "Ring o' Roses." Each child in the ring sang a bell couplet in turn, then all the children danced round in rollicking fashion with plenty of stamping, while they sang in chorus:

Gay go up and gay go down  
To ring the bells of London Town.

There was no "chopper" nor tug-of-war. Round singing of this kind was probably a relic of Celtic festivity, and was performed by the Druids.

Everyone must surely be familiar with the game as it is played today: it has spread to so many countries. In Nottinghamshire it was at one time played as "Tarts and cheese-cakes," and another version began with "Plum pudding and roast beef." But the procedure is always the same. Two taller children secretly choose their names, one representing "Oranges" and the other "Lemons." They hold up their clasped hands to make an arch, and the rest of the players pass under in a long file, holding on to each other, and singing the rhyme in its shorter version. When they reach "to chop off your head" those forming the arch continue "chop, chop, chop . . ." at each repetition letting their arms fall lightly on the shoulders of successive children in the file. With the final "chop" the upraised arms fall heavily, and a child is caught and imprisoned between them. The others retire out of earshot, and the prisoner is secretly asked which he prefers—oranges or lemons. Having made his choice he is sent to stand behind whichever of the leaders he has unwittingly selected.

## *Oranges and Lemons*

The game then proceeds as before; and when all the children have been caught and have made their choice of leader, there is a tug-of-war between the two sides of "Oranges" and "Lemons."

This shorter version holds a deeper significance than the long one, and now the bright fragments of our mosaic will be shifted hither and thither in the effect to make an intelligible pattern. The play of children in this game reflects events that took place in the adult world, and an interesting theory has been put forward by Lady Gomme, the well-known authority on folk-lore. She suggests that the game represents a contest and a punishment; the contest being between two opposing parties, either of different parishes or of different social ranks, such as barons and the common folk.

Contests between parishes, or wards of parishes, were common in mediæval England, and were usually carried out with the aid of a rope or a football. The thickly crowded parishes of London would offer grand opportunities for matches of this kind, though they probably took place in other parts of the country as well. One authority has preserved an old song of the bells of Derby on Shrove Tuesday mornings, which goes like this:

Pancakes and fritters,  
Say All Saints and St. Peter's;  
When will the ball come,  
Say the bells of Alkum;  
At two they will throw,  
Says St. Werabo; (St. Werburgh)  
O! very well,  
Says little Michael.

## *Oranges and Lemons*

These words were chanted in the streets before the great annual game of football, which was played with a very large ball by one half of the town against the other half. In such a match oranges and lemons would probably not be fruits but the colours of the two opposing parties. Adherents naturally wore the colours of their chiefs, just as political enthusiasts today sport the colours of their party. Bells of the parish churches played their part in these competitions, first calling the citizens together to take part or to watch, then ringing for the victors.

The last two lines of the rhyme are absurdly irrelevant: they go off at a tangent regardless of the other couplets, and here one is reminded of the forgotten fears and evils that lurked in the background of some nursery rhymes. To give but two examples: "Ring a Ring o' Roses" is supposed by some folklorists to refer to the Great Plague of 1665. The "ring o' roses" were the fatal plague spots, and the "pocket full of posies" the bunches of sweet-smelling herbs that people carried as a means of disinfectant. "Tish-oo, tish-oo, all fall down" described the suddenness of the attack and its usually quick and fatal ending. While this interpretation is not universally accepted, we are on surer ground with "London Bridge is Broken Down." This takes us right back to the time when the Danes destroyed London's only bridge across the Thames. It was most important that the new structure should be strong and enduring, but evil was at work; in earlier and more lengthy versions of the rhyme even stone was washed away, implying sinister supernatural opposition. And so a watchman was appointed to guard the



## *Oranges and Lemons*

bridge against the malicious forces of Nature; and he was given a dog that barked all night.\* In later times the watchman and his dog were dropped out of the rhyme, and superstition gave way to common-sense: the bridge was rebuilt of elm timber in 1163, and thirteen years after it was decided to put up a stone structure. This was completed in 1209.

When we come to "Oranges and Lemons" there is no doubt about the shadow of evil. Lady Gomme regards the last couplet as the punishment part of the game, and offers a macabre explanation. A mediæval criminal on his way to execution was accompanied by torches and the tolling of bells; hence "a candle to light you to bed" had the horrible association of these flickering corpse-lights that accompanied the funeral procession and lit the victim to his doom, and was perhaps yet another reason for the inclusion of church bells—tolling this time—in the game. The monotonous chanting, all on one note, of these final lines would imitate the tolling of a bell.

The "chopper to chop off your head" refers to the execution of traitors: the funeral torches of criminals, the axes of executioners, and the severed heads displayed on pikes would be familiar objects in the Middle Ages and later times. Little do our children dream, as they run under the arched arms and are laughingly caught by the "chopper," that their game is the shadow of a once-true and dreadful reality.

A contest and a punishment: but surely something has gone wrong here? One would expect an

\* *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes*, edited by Iona and Peter Opie (1951).

## *Oranges and Lemons*

execution to take place *after* the contest, when it was known who were the victors and who the vanquished; yet, with a complete disregard of chronology, the proceedings have been reversed, and the traitor, after losing his head, is secretly invited to throw in his lot with one party or the other, and then pulls his weight in a contest of strength. It seems quite crazy; but the reversal of events could quite well happen during the slow passing of centuries, as the original significance of the game and its episodes was forgotten. Or the last two lines may be part of an entirely different game that has somehow become grafted on to this one. Again we are left guessing.

The "Oranges and Lemons" churches in the short version, recognised as belonging to the rhyme today, are:

St. Clement Danes,  
St. Martin-in-the-Fields,  
St. Sepulchre, Holborn,  
St. Leonard, Shoreditch,  
St. Dunstan, Stepney,  
St. Mary-le-Bow.

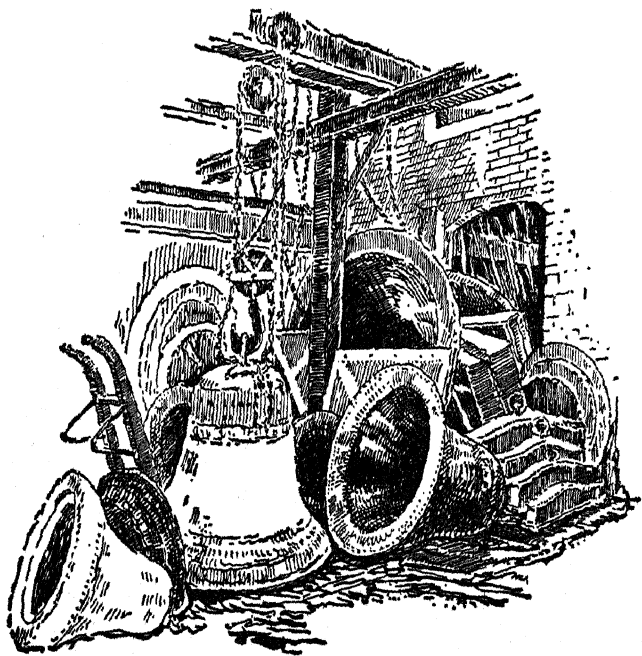
Up to the outbreak of war all these had fine peals of bells; but some have been silenced—only temporarily, one hopes.

With regard to the churches mentioned in the long version, it is impossible to know how or why they were chosen. The rhymes are probably very much corrupted, and their origin is so hazy and uncertain that we cannot tell if they had any special significance. The churches and saints may have been chosen at random, or by reason of their propinquity

## *Oranges and Lemons*

or popularity, or for the sake of their bells; any explanation is possible. And the fact that dedications to the same saint were frequently duplicated and reduplicated among the churches makes the task of identification still more hopeless. Who can say with certainty at this late date which particular church of St. Martin or St. Ann or St. Peter was referred to hundreds of years ago?

We can only be on the safe side by including them all.



*Bells at the Whitechapel Foundry*

*To ring the bells . . .*

FROM the very earliest times bells have played an important part in the life of this country. Their music is woven into the fabric of our history, and runs like a gleaming silver thread through the multi-coloured tapestry of events. Bells have shared in the joys and sorrows of the nation: they have proclaimed victories, rejoiced at coronations and jubilees and uttered thanksgivings; they have warned of dangers and raised alarms; mourned in muffled tones for the death of sovereigns and heroes. Some of these occasions are noted in the accounts of St. Mary Hill, in the City of London:

1509 Paid to sevyn men that rong the bellis when the  
Kings grace went to Westmynster to be crownyd  
. . . o. 1. 0 (This was Henry VIII's coronation.)  
1536 For rynging the grete bell six hours for Queen  
Jane, and for ringing the bellis divers peles for the  
same . . . o. 2. 6

And at St. Margaret's, Westminster, we find:

1553 Paid for bread and drink on Ash Wednesday,  
to the ringers at the Victory and overthrow of Wyat and  
his adherents . . . o. o. 8  
1586 Paid for ringing at the beheading of the Queen  
of Scotts . . . o. 1. 0

## Oranges and Lemons

1605 Paid the ringers for ringing at the time when  
the Parliament Hous should have been blown up  
. . . 0. 10. 0

In our own time church bells were silenced during the war, and were only to be rung in case of invasion. Always, as the story of our country slowly unfolds, the bells play their part in it.

There were no clocks in mediæval times, nor factory buzzers; the daily life of the people was regulated by bells that rang from the church, and often bells of different tone or pitch were used for different functions. They summoned men to work, and told them when it was time to stop. An inscription on a Coventry bell says: I RING AT SIX TO LET MEN KNOW WHEN TOO AND FROM THEAIR WORKE TO GO 1675. Bells gave warning of fire, and by the sounding of the curfew (*couvre-feu*) told the moment for covering or extinguishing household fires against incendiary outbreak that might so easily occur where dwellings were made of wood. The Mote or Common bell summoned citizens to meetings; and in the rural districts Harvest and Gleaning bells set a limit to those labours, and the Oven bell told tenants when the lord's oven was ready to receive their bread for baking. Such were some of the everyday signals.

The Church was not slow to grasp the opportunities offered by bells. She used the bell-founders' art as she used that of builders, sculptors, painters and musicians "to adorn the beauty of holiness." The first bell-founders were monks, but later on founding became an ordinary trade. Some of the craftsmen were itinerant, like tinkers, and travelled from place

## *Oranges and Lemons*

to place wherever there was a demand for their work. Others remained stationary, and as far back as the thirteenth century Belzettars', or Belyetters', Lane (Bell-founders' Lane) denoted the spot where this craft was practised in the City of London. The little thoroughfare survives today under the corrupted name of Billiter Street; it connects Leadenhall Street with Fenchurch Street.

Besides calling folk to worship, the church bells marked the saints' days and canonical hours; they announced festivals, processions, litanies and stages of the service, so that those unable to be present might unite in spirit with the worshippers. It is interesting to note which of these ringings survive today and which have been discontinued.

The Sermon bell warned listeners of the inclusion of a sermon in the service. Sermons were by no means a usual and inevitable occurrence: in Elizabeth I's day preachers had to be specially licensed, and a licence was only granted after strict examination had shown the applicant to be a suitable person with the right religious views. A bell at Blakeney was inscribed: I RING TO SERMON WITH A LVSTY BOME THAT ALL MAY COME AND NONE MAY STOP AT HOME. The Sanctus bell was rung in the church tower during mass at "Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus, Dominus Deus Sabaoth," not only to warn the illiterate congregation to bow the head in solemn worship of the Trinity, but to remind others outside: the Sacring bell was often hung on the rood screen, and was rung at the Elevation of the Host. The Angelus, rung at 6.0 a.m., noon and 6.0 p.m. daily, commemorated the angelic visit to the Virgin Mary,

## *Oranges and Lemons*

and was sometimes known as the Gabriel bell. Pancake bells reminded people to get shriven before Ash Wednesday. In *Poor Robin's Almanack* for 1684 is the couplet:

Hark I hear the Pancake bell  
And fritters make a gallant smell.

Man was companioned through life by bells, and when death approached the Houseling bell, a small hand-bell, was carried tinkling before the Sacrament that was taken to a sick person, and the Passing bell asked for the prayers of hearers when his end came. At the last rites the Lych bell was rung ahead of the funeral procession. With all this secular and sacred chiming a constant tintinnabulation must have filled the mediæval air.

Bells were always solemnly dedicated and blessed, and as this was supposed to give them supernatural influence they were rung to banish evil spirits, plague, tempests and lightning. An old Latin inscription expresses their functions as rhythmically as though the bells themselves were swinging to it:

*Funera plango, fulgura frango, Sabbata pango,  
Excito lentos, dissipo ventos, pace cruentos.*

(I mourn for death, I break the lightning, I fix the Sabbath, I rouse the lazy, I scatter the winds, I appease the cruel.)

The dedications were usually to saints, and the inscriptions stamped on the bells were of endless variety. Generally, in the Middle Ages, there was simply the saint's name followed by a prayer: "Augustine, protect thy bell and keep it sound" (translation); but some bore rhyming verses, and

## *Oranges and Lemons*

others had the names of donors and asked for prayers for their souls: e.g. O THOU BLYSSID TRINITE OF BRIAN RODLYFF HAF PYTE. Occasionally one finds a simple statement such as ROBERTUS STANCHAV SKYHERE (Squire) ME LET MAKE, or an inscription derived from Scripture or the Liturgy: many London bells have SIT NOMEN for SIT NOMEN DOMINI BENEDICTUM (Blessed be the name of the Lord). The decoration on old bells was beautiful with Gothic lettering and elaborate initials, crosses, shields, emblems and the trade-marks of founders.

At first the church towers contained only one, or possibly two, heavy bells which clanged effectively on all occasions; but by mediæval times all the London churches probably had three to five bells, and the more important ones six. Can we not hear those three to five notes—especially three (G, B, D) emphasised in the tune of “Oranges and Lemons”?



And then another church answering at a different pitch, but with the same range of notes?



Tuning was a very rough and ready business in those days; the rim of the bell was merely chipped away to alter the pitch; as long as there was some difference between the sounds, that was all that mattered. But jangling discords overhead seem to



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blend harmoniously, and the bells of the crowded City churches must have clashed gloriously together.

In later years the art of bell-ringing split into two branches, carillon-playing and change-ringing. The people of the Low Countries tuned their bells so as to produce carillons; these require thirty-six to forty-two bells. So-called carillon tunes which are repeated at certain hours of the day (as formerly at St. Clement Danes and St. Giles, Cripplegate) are played automatically by means of pins set in revolving drums, on the same principle as a musical box or barrel-organ. True carillon music is played on a keyboard of long wooden pegs resembling a clumsy primitive piano. The carillonneur wears bands of leather to protect his clenched fists as he smites the wooden "keys"; and pedals operate the bigger deep-sounding bells. Those who have stood at windy street corners in Bruges or Malines will remember how enchanting and other-worldly is this music tossed about in the sky. Cascades of sweet bell-notes are caught up and blown on the wind, and little clanging chords hang in the air.

Here in England we moved on to change-ringing with rope and wheel. It took strength and skill to set the bells swinging in the belfries, and bell-ringing became a recognised sport practised not only by ordinary ringers but by students at the universities, lawyers and country gentlemen. It has been compared to rowing, for both require utmost strength, perfect timing, and concord among members of the band. The oldest known company of ringers was probably the Brethren of the Gild of Westminster, which dated from 1254: their music must have been

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extremely haphazard, as no rules then existed for change-ringing. Later came the Gild of St. Paul's (1507) and the Schollers of Chepesyde (1603), who became the Royal Society of Cumberland Youths.

The Puritans considered bell-ringing superstitious and Sabbath-breaking, to say the least. Music of any kind was impious in their eyes; organs were disallowed in the churches, and to ring more than one bell before a service was as heinous a crime as murder or adultery. And yet comparatively few bells were destroyed during the Commonwealth—perhaps because it meant the labour and discomfort of climbing towers to hunt giddily for Popish inscriptions. Where the Puritan influence was chiefly felt was in the casting of bells; the work of the foundries was checked during the Civil War, and for a short time after the Restoration little or no casting was done. However, there was an abundance of second-hand bells which had been confiscated at the Dissolution, and these had perforce to be used.

As a result of the ban on church bells, change-ringing became purely secular in the seventeenth century. Bell-ringing societies were formed, and their members travelled from belfry to belfry in London and up and down the country, taking a turn at ringing whenever the opportunity arose. Many of these were small companies that lasted only a short time; but of those that survive, the Ancient Society of College Youths boasts records that go back to 1637. This company derived its name from "The College of the Holy Ghost and Hospital of God's House," situated in College Hill, which was founded by Sir Richard Whittington in 1424.

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The Society grew out of an earlier band of priests and laymen who used to ring the bells of St. Michael Paternoster Royal (Whittington's church) and St. Martin's Vintry, both of which adjoined the College. Incidentally, it is to the Ancient Society that we owe the opening couplet of "Oranges and Lemons." During the years 1725 and 1726 they often rang the famous bells of St. Bride's Church, and so beautifully that Fleet Street was crowded with the carriages of the nobility and gentlefolk who came to listen to the bell-music. The ringers also were men of high degree, and this brilliant assemblage gave rise to the lines

Gay go up and gay go down  
To ring the bells of London Town.

Another band well known today is the Royal Society of Cumberland Youths. They took this name in 1746 as a compliment to the victor of Culloden.

As time went on more "changes" were invented and worked out on mathematical lines, and bells were rehung in a different fashion to make the ringing of these intricate chimes easier. Fabian Stedman, of Cambridge, may be called the father of change-ringing. He invented various peals, some of which are known by his name—e.g. Stedman Triples, Stedman Cinques, Stedman Caters—and in 1668 he wrote *Tintinnalogia*, a famous book on change-ringing. Changes run into many thousands and take hours to perform—a real test of endurance. The greatest number of changes which can be produced from twelve bells is 479,001,600, and, with twelve men ringing eight hours a day, would take 133 years to perform! If the men rang continuously without

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any break they could accomplish the task in a mere  $44\frac{1}{2}$  years.

Bell-ringing has a fascinating vocabulary of its own in which occur terms like hunting, dodging, doubles, bob, touches, cinques, caters, royals, course, etc. The notation of the changes is set down in numbers, each number representing a bell, and looks like a difficult addition sum. For instance, here is the beginning of Grandsire Triples (the highest bell is No. 1):

1234567  
2134576  
2314567  
3241657  
3426175  
4362715  
4637251 etc.

One would never think that dull rows of figures like these could give rise to the heavenly clangour of Stedman Cinques, Kent Treble Bob Royal, Cambridge Surprise, Double Norwich, Court Bob Maximus and the rest.

The ringers carry the sequences in their heads, so it can be imagined how much concentration must be brought to the job. Not only that: a big bell takes longer to sound than a little bell, which responds quickly to the pull; and this has to be remembered and allowed for when ringing. Musicianship is not a necessary qualification for change-ringing; what is important is a keen sense of rhythm, a good memory, and ability to concentrate deeply for long periods.

To see bells in motion during change-ringing is like watching some fantastic ballet; and to be in the

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bell-chamber of St. Paul's Cathedral, high up in the south-west tower, when the Ancient Society of College Youths are ringing can be both fascinating and terrifying, as this account shows:

My guide and I climbed the spiral stone stairs, squeezing up the last steep narrow twisting steps in darkness till we emerged on to a little wooden platform set in the circular opening of the tower. From this we could see an amazing panorama of London spread out; but I turned and leaned over a railing to look at the bells just beneath. There they lay, twelve greenish-grey monsters of different sizes, waiting motionless in their separate cages, each bell fixed to its wooden wheel. Their open mouths were upturned, brazen tongues lolled against the rims, and inscriptions were faintly visible on their shoulders in the shadows below.

Suddenly—with such force as though a heavy blow had hit one's ear-drums—the bells went into action. We were swamped in an immense and deep reverberation that hummed all around, deafening us and cutting us off from the outside world, a reverberation threaded by the high sweet whistle of overtones.

It was quite terrifying at first. The bell-chamber was a mass of heaving metal. The bells were dipping, tossing, somersaulting in wild gaiety. Four lively smaller ones plunged over almost simultaneously; two bigger ones bowed to each other as though setting to partners, and then, when the order of ringing changed, bowed to those on their other sides. Over in a corner the great tenor bell dived and swung up, dived and swung up in a solemn *pas seul* while before him the smallest bells romped and flung themselves about in a frenzy.

On and on the bells danced madly till one turned dizzy. So rapid were the repetitions that movement never ceased. And all the time the deep deafening throbbing and its shrill whistle persisted. I leaned over to try and catch the note of a bell just below me, but no single sound could be distinguished in that all-pervading hum.

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It was hard to break the spell cast by the swinging bells, but there was more to be seen elsewhere. As I followed my guide down the difficult stairway, wishing that Sir Christopher Wren could have allowed an inch more on either side, there came a moment when the reverberation suddenly resolved itself into joyous clashing, and the bell-notes could be heard chasing each other in quick succession.

Going into the ringing room was like entering a church, so hushed was the atmosphere. Thirteen men and boys in shirt-sleeves, their faces glistening with sweat, were manipulating the ropes in a tense calculating silence broken only by the conductor calling the changes. The ringers stood on big box-like pedestals of varying heights, with arched metal grips into which they could thrust their feet to avoid being pulled off them by the weight of the bells. The tenor bell is so heavy that it takes two men to ring it.

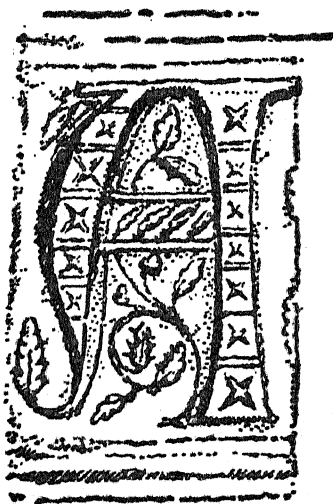
The men's bodies and arms made a rhythmical pattern as they bent with the pull of the ropes, and straightened again: *down-up, down-up, down-up*. . . . The ropes with their red-white-and-blue sallies slid easily up and down through holes in the ceiling in time with the pulling: *right up, right down, right up, right down*. . . . At one pull the ropes lay in coils on the floor; at the next they tautened as they slipped through the ringers' hands: *right up, right down*. . . . And from the tower the tumult of bells proclaimed Grandsire Triples. This is how the bells of the "Oranges and Lemons" churches are rung today: we have travelled far from the five untuneful notes.

Sunshine falling through the dusty windows lit the backs and ropes of the men nearest, and cast grotesque moving shadows across the floor of the ringing room. It illumined tablets on the walls that recorded the names of the bells, their donors and inscriptions, and set forth the ringing exploits of College Youths of the past, whose successors were now wielding the ropes. It shone on the bronze bust of one who had been a beloved conductor for forty years; the fraternity of the Youths creates a close bond that embraces much besides ringing.

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The hands of the clock on the wall moved inexorably towards service time. Grandsire Triples drew to a close, and then followed "calling the bells in peal," which meant adjusting six bells by means of ringing, so that they would lie in the right position for ringing before the evening service. Now only five minutes remained, and two boys took charge of the tenor bell. Its deep sonorous note called the people to church as for hundreds of years the bells of the City churches had summoned worshippers.

When I went downstairs and out into the City "the great bell of Powle's" was still ringing; and after it ceased there came drifting across the acres of devastation a faint far-off chime of bells. So thin and plaintive was the sound that it seemed the ghost of a chime echoing down the centuries, a sad and lonely ghost of the mediæval "merry bells of London Town."



*Gothic letter from an old bell*

*. . . of London Town*

POSSIBLY the first question that springs to one's mind is: when were the "Oranges and Lemons" churches built?

For an answer we must go back a long time—in some cases a very long time indeed—for most of the churches have been re-erected on their sites.

The Romans built the City of Londinium where they had found a British settlement; they walled it, set up temples and villas and established a trading centre. (A model and plan to be seen in the crypt of All Hallows-by-the-Tower gives a good idea of what Londinium must have looked like.) But after they left in the fifth century nothing was heard of London for another two hundred years. Trade languished; the Saxons fighting up and down the country had no use for walled cities; and the Danes laid London waste in A.D. 839.

Alfred restored it and gradually the people drifted back; quays and houses were built. At first the churches were of wood, and later of stone, but in both cases very much crowded together; and to add to the congestion, priories and convents sprang up, till in the twelfth century there were 126 parish churches and thirteen religious houses in the City.



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London at that time consisted largely of churches, convents and gardens pleasantly watered by streams. Some of the forerunners of our present churches were standing then.

This self-contained City was walled, and the wall was broken by four main gates, Aeldgate, or Alegate, on the east, Aeldersgate (Ealdred's Gate) on the north, Ludgate on the west, Bridge-gate, "over the river of Thames," on the south; and four lesser openings, Bishopsgate, Moregate, Creplegate, Newgate, with posterns at the Tower and at Greyfriars (near the present General Post Office).

And what about trade? How and where was that carried on if the City was crammed with churches? Surprisingly enough, business was transacted in the churchyards and churches. These buildings were not reserved for worship only : people drifted in and out as they liked, and the naves as well as the yards outside were used for the sale of goods. Small though the churches might be, their bare floors, unencumbered by pews or chairs, accommodated bales and piles of merchandise, and in their empty spaces men could meet and talk and do business. Nor was that all. Fairs, plays and dances took place in the nave, courts of justice were held there, and, in fact, the parish church was a general *rendez-vous* for the citizens, and the social and business centre, as well as the spiritual, of their lives.

A serious fire in 1136 laid waste a great part of the City. Most of the houses were timber-framed and thatched, and the flames spread rapidly eastward from London Bridge to St. Clement Danes, consuming the bridge, houses and churches. Then in

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the thirteenth century came a wave of religious activity which was due partly to the Crusades and partly to the coming of the friars. Ruined churches were rebuilt or restored and others founded, additional bridges were erected, and an impetus was given to trade and travel.

But there was yet another reason for this sudden increase in churches, and that was—fear ; stark, conscience-smiting fear. People in the Middle Ages, inhabiting insanitary timber houses that were jammed together, lived in constant dread of plague and fire which brought sudden death in their train; and many were conscious of their sins, real or imaginary. Hell was an actual place, and the tortures of the damned were often portrayed on the walls of the churches and graphically described by the preachers. Hence there was a pressing need to propitiate Heaven and expiate wrongdoing, and how could one accomplish this better than by works of charity, chief among which ranked the building of bridges and churches? Bridges were important: to shorten and make easier a man's journey by throwing a bridge across a river was a really good deed, and therefore counted for much in the eyes of the heavenly hierarchy. Churches mattered even more, for prayers might save a man from hell. Thus we find wealthy men founding chantries and churches and endowing them in order that masses might be said for the repose of their souls after death. The name of the founder was often preserved in the dedication of the church, as in St. John Zachary, St. Benet Fink, St. Mary Somerset and St. Martin

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Outwich. Some of the "Oranges and Lemons" churches belong to this period.

By the end of the fifteenth century William Dunbar was writing:

Strong be thy wallis that about thee standis;  
Wise be the people that within thee dwellis;  
Fresh is thy ryver with his lusty strandis;  
Blith be thy chirches, wele sownyng be thy bellis;  
Rich be thy merchauntis in substance that excellis;  
Fair be their wives, right lovesome, white and small;  
Clere be thy virgyns, lusty under kellis; (hoods)  
London, thou art the flour of Cities all.

Two-thirds of the area of the City was occupied by churches and monastic establishments, not to mention those just outside the walls. They lay thickest on the hill that sloped down to the river along the length of the City, and many stood cheek by jowl with each other. Even today it is possible to see how closely crowded some of them were: All Hallows the Great and the Less were next door; St. Mary Mounthaunt and St. Mary Somerset stood opposite each other; St. Alban, Wood Street, and St. Mary Aldermanbury almost touching. The parishes were ridiculously small, sometimes comprising about three acres and not more than fifty houses. Some of the churches were very small, too: St. Ethelburga's, in Bishopsgate, is a good example of a small mediæval City church. Others were much larger, but all were served by a multiplicity of priests and chaplains, sometimes one for each altar in the church.

Every church in the City had chantries associated with it, and they must have run into hundreds; this state of affairs brought into being a special class of

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ecclesiastics who were known as mass priests. They were not under any strict control, being only loosely connected with the churches; they had no parish duties and little responsibility; their work was simply to say masses for the souls of the departed. As might be expected, this lazy life appealed to those who were not particularly energetic or devout, and mass priests gradually became a scandal in the Church, being given over to covetousness, lust, gluttony and other vices. Chaucer knew about them, and thus compares his good Parson with one of these priests:

He sette not his Benefice to hire  
And left his shepe accombred in the mire,  
And ran to London unto Seint Poules  
To seken him a chanterie for soules.

Pictures, painting and carving decorated the interiors, which were stuffy and smelly, the odour of incense vying with the odour of unwashed bodies. But religion was a splendid and colourful affair, with singing, banners and processions. Above all, processions. Preaching was done out of doors, for example from "Powle's Cross," in the churchyard of St. Paul's. Wherever possible churches were built with plenty of space for processions of the guilds and fraternities that played such an important part in civic life.

The great religious houses of St. Martin-le-Grand, Greyfriars, Holy Trinity and Christchurch, St. Bartholomew, St. John, Clerkenwell, Austin Friars and St. Helen's nunnery lay to the north, and the number of people they employed must have been prodigious. At St. Paul's, which was the largest

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establishment, ecclesiastical and lay, and included the dean and archdeacons, greater and lesser canons, chantry priests and vicars, almoner, vergers, scribes and transcribers and a host of purely secular workers, the baker used to bake 40,000 loaves a year, and the brewer brewed 67,814 gallons of beer for the same period. There must have been altogether several thousand dependants.

Time went on, and the City grew: spires and towers and pinnacles of churches rose above the high-pitched roofs and carved gables of overhanging storeys, above the narrow crooked lanes where filth accumulated and men and horses jostled each other, where traders cried their wares and lively young apprentices played pranks. People went to church because they had to. Relics and pilgrimages were common, and formed a source of financial supply for the churches, which were still generously staffed. The monastic establishments waxed richer than ever.

Let us pause here for a moment and observe them at the height of their power. They owned extensive lands and properties, and the monks must have been well organised to cope with the administration of these. The priories and monasteries were centres of learning, of music, art and architecture. They kept the flame of scholarship alight until the universities took over; and kings and statesmen did not hesitate to seek advice from men of such erudition and wisdom. The poor and sick crowded to their doors to be helped, each according to his need; and in some cases outlaws could claim sanctuary and be safe from their pursuers.

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That is the bright side of the picture, and would it were the only one. But good and evil grew side by side then as they do now, and it cannot be denied that the religious houses were sometimes places of immorality and vice. They were also profit-making concerns, and batted on the superstition and credulity of the common folk. Relics were multiplied to excess until some saints must have possessed a score of thumbs or toes, and bones enough for six of themselves. Avarice and greed dominated some of the Orders. But they met their match in Henry VIII, and the Dissolution put an end to their extravagances.

Henry, for his private ends, flouted the authority of the Pope, and declared that the King of England must be the Head of the Church of England. Also for his private ends, and masking greed with righteous anger, he took possession of the lands and buildings and treasures of the Church, bestowing some on his friends and enriching himself very considerably with the rest. But in doing away with the bad he also uprooted the good; the wheat was pulled up with the tares, and after the Dissolution there arose an urgent need for hospitals, schools and workhouses.

The reign of Mary Tudor, with its religious persecutions, started a horror of "Popery." Elizabeth was easy-going. She only desired that men should worship peaceably, and gave them freedom to do so. She certainly decreed that fish should be eaten on Fridays, but not for religious reasons; it was in order to encourage the fish trade, which had been languishing.

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Later the Puritans in their excessive zeal swept away everything even remotely connected with "the Old Religion." Those who observed saints' days were punished; in 1644 the Long Parliament decreed "that the 25th December should be strictly observed as a fast, and that all men should pass it in humbly bemoaning the great national sin which they and their fathers had so often committed on that day by romping under the mistletoe, eating boar's head and drinking wine flavoured with apples."\* The altar became a wooden "table," and the Prayer Book was suppressed. The Bible became the sole authority, and the stern and fearful teaching of the Old Testament ruled men's lives.

Even after the monarchy was restored in the person of Charles II, and liberty of religion was established, the Puritan stamp remained, and this had a deep effect not only on religious thought but on architecture. When, after the Great Fire of 1666, Wren undertook to rebuild fifty-one of the ninety-eight churches that had been destroyed, he had to adapt them to the religious belief and practices of the times.

He made no attempt to give mystery to his churches. There were no shadowed aisles, no richly dim windows of stained glass; all was to be light and space; and white walls and ample windows with clear glass achieved these ends.

To listen (or sleep) in comfort during these long harangues the congregation had to be seated in comfort. Formerly there had been no seating of any kind in the churches except a stone ledge that

\* Macaulay's *History of England*.

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ran round the walls and was resorted to by the infirm and aged, so giving rise to the expression, "The weakest goes to the wall." Now, in these new buildings, rows of high enclosed pews filled the body of the church, and galleries, often top-heavy, accommodated the overflow of worshippers from the ground floor. With the Restoration the nobles and their retinues had returned to London, swelling the population, and people still went habitually to church, though since the Fire there were fewer churches to hold them. Increased congregations had therefore to be provided for.

Later on some of these pews were like loose-boxes, and were furnished with curtains to hide the slumbers of the occupants until a sonorous "Lastly, my brethren," and a nudge from a more wakeful neighbour brought them back to consciousness and the end of the sermon. It was roomy pews like these that prompted Bishop Corbett of Norwich to remark: "Stately pews have now become tabernacles with rings and curtains to them, locks and keys and cushions, I had almost said bolsters and pillows, and for these we love the church. I will not guess what is done within them—who sits, stands, or lies asleep."

Wren was always careful, when making his ground plans, to see that pews for the wealthy did not take up too much room. He insisted that space must be left for the poorer people who could not afford pew-rents and therefore had to kneel on the floor.

In the Wren churches we find Moses and Aaron, the law-givers, constantly depicted instead of Christ and the Virgin Mary. The Ten Commandments



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appear on the walls behind the "table" in company with the Lord's Prayer or the Creed, and carvings of cherubs take the place of saints; the Puritan idea is still in force. When, in addition, we see carvings of flowers and fruit with no hint of Christianity about them, we are apt to regard Wren's churches as interesting from the architectural point of view alone. But if we spend any time in them we will soon realise that, in spite of so much purely secular decoration, religion is very much alive. And it is only fair to add that some of the interiors have been modified and the reredoses altered to meet modern needs of worship.

Since the days when these churches were rebuilt we have had the blight of eighteenth-century religious indifference. Then came the Wesleyan revival, and preaching once more became a living force. After that the Tractarian Movement restored the sacraments to their former importance. Now all may think and worship as they please—there is no rigid uniformity; and whatever a man's belief may be he will find it represented in one or another of the City churches.

But London has not been able to sit down comfortably and enjoy this happy state of things. In 1940-41 the City endured its third great ordeal by fire, and just as, before the second world war, the Great Fire of 1666 was an historical landmark, so future generations will refer to events as happening "before the Blitz" or "after the Blitz."

Before this war there were still forty-seven churches left in the City. Architecturally London had gone through a bad period when Wren churches

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were pulled down and in the name of "restoration" all kinds of horrors were perpetrated. But there were forty-seven churches left. Then came the "Blitz," before which all former damage by fire faded into insignificance. The worst nights for the City churches were those of December 29th, 1940, and May 10th, 1941, when a perfect hail of incendiaries fell: the City was lit up by fires, and flames licked hungrily at the buildings. Many treasured churches and halls were burnt out on this terrible occasion.

There was plenty of other bombing, there were plenty of other fires, during London's long ordeal, when so many of the inhabitants led a troglodyte existence, and no one knew what the next day or night might bring. When the records were published in 1944 it was found that out of a total of 460 acres of built-up land in the City, buildings covering about 164 acres were destroyed. There fell on the City 417 high-explosive bombs of varying sizes, thirteen parachute mines, 2,498 oil bombs and many thousands of incendiaries. Of the forty-seven City churches only twenty-seven were left intact, or had escaped serious damage. The Bishop of London's Commission, realising their historical and architectural value, has suggested that as many as possible of those damaged shall be restored or rebuilt.

Those which remain are now doubly precious, and not only on account of their history and architecture and the treasures they contain. Although the tide of population has receded from the City, and their function has changed, the churches still play their

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part in its life. They are in regular use—witness the notice-boards—and in most of them one is conscious of a deeply spiritual atmosphere. Many have special midday services and recitals of music for the City workers; and always they are quiet places where people can go to rest and meditate, if not to pray. The utter stillness of a City church is startling after the noise in the streets; and rarely does one enter without seeing kneeling figures. Most of the churches are open daily until three in the afternoon; and the seats in their little churchyards provide further resting places for the weary and the old.

And what of the future with its replanning and rebuilding? What is going to happen to the City and its churches?

Reconstruction plans are on foot, but it would be unwise to prophesy too definitely at this date. Let the bells give their answer: "I'm sure I don't know," says the great bell of Bow."

*Here comes a candle . . .*

LET us take away these words of the rhyme from their gruesome context, and think for a few moments about one whose genius shines down the years less like a candle than as a great and dazzling light, and whose work has done so much to illumine and adorn the City—Sir Christopher Wren.

Some of us talk glibly about Wren architecture and Wren churches, but do we know anything about the man who built the churches? Have we any knowledge of his personality and character, his friends, the influences that shaped his life?

His likeness by Kneller, in the National Portrait Gallery, shows a keen-faced man in the prime of life, wearing a curled brown periwig, a beaver-brown velvet coat with gold buttons and braid, and a white cravat. He has the half-drooping eyelids of the artist, but a firm mouth with a kindly twist at the corners, and the whole figure gives an impression of alertness as he sits at a table on which is displayed a plan of St. Paul's. The eyes are kind, too, and the portrait bears out the characteristics given by one of his biographers: "Reverence to God and complete loyalty to his royal employers; faithful and enduring loyalty to his friends; high integrity of purpose; a

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sweet and gentle disposition that met all criticism in a courtly fashion"—such were the virtues of Sir Christopher Wren, and they confirm one's feeling that only a noble mind could have produced the noble works we see around us in the City.

His father, Dr. Christopher Wren, had eleven children, who did not all survive; he became Dean of Windsor soon after the birth of his sixth child, Christopher, in 1632. The boy was educated at Westminster School, under its notable headmaster, Dr. Busby, and at Wadham College, Oxford. From the beginning young Wren showed inventive talent, and always he moved in the society of men who were gifted and intellectual—and at this stage older than himself. One of these friends has described him as "a prodigy of a boy and a miracle of a man." Christopher's was an all-round genius, and only chance, apparently, turned it to architecture. It is said that he never had a drawing lesson in his life, but he had a talent for fine and accurate drawing, and of his early efforts there still exist some good anatomical drawings and a sketch of Windsor.

At the time of leaving Oxford he could be considered a brilliant scholar and scientist, and among the ingenious things he contrived while at Wadham were a weather-clock, an instrument to write in the dark, a "Ballance—to weigh without weights," a diplographic instrument for writing with two pens, "divers new Engines for the raising of Water" and new kinds of musical instruments. When he was twenty-four he was offered the Chair of Astronomy at Gresham College, London, where there were endowed professorships for Divinity, Astronomy,

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Geometry, Music, Law, Physics and Rhetoric, and a lecture was given on one of these subjects every day of the week. Shortly afterwards he accepted the Savillian Professorship of Astronomy in the University of Oxford. Neither of these appointments had any connection with art, but the Gresham College professorship led to something memorable. Certain "curious and learned gentlemen" who attended Wren's lectures used to meet afterwards for discussion, and soon they formed themselves into "A Colledge for the Promotion of Physico-Mathematical Experimentall Learning." The King (Charles II) became interested in this new society and its work, and in 1662 granted it a charter—and that is how the Royal Society came into being. Among the co-founders with Wren were Dr. Wilkins, the Warden of Wadham College, Evelyn, Pepys, Robert Boyle, the famous chemist, Lawrence Rooke, astronomer, and Sir Robert Murray, a "renowned chemist" and mathematician.

One of Wren's greatest friends was John Evelyn, the diarist, who was high in favour with Charles II. Evelyn brought Wren to the notice of the King, who asked him if he would go to Tangier and report on the state of the harbour and fortifications there. Tangier, it will be remembered, formed part of the dowry of Catherine of Braganza, Charles's bride. The King offered Wren a good salary and promised him the post of Surveyor-General of the King's Works as soon as it should fall vacant. But these inducements were vain. Wren, never a robust man, disliked the thought of the long voyage, and begged to decline the honour. His Majesty must have been

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strongly attracted by this brilliant personality, for he straightway created a special post—a Deputy-Surveyorship—and offered it to Wren. It was accepted; and Wren's first big commission was the building of the Sheldonian Theatre at Oxford.

To our minds it must seem strange that he turned so easily from astronomy to architecture; but his mathematics and power of mechanical invention would be considered suitable qualifications in the seventeenth century. Also, he may have had a secret interest in architecture before this. His very first essay in this art was a single small doorway in Ely Cathedral, designed for his uncle, Matthew Wren, Bishop of Ely. The theory has been put forward that Evelyn knew of this interest and therefore recommended his versatile friend to the King; but this is pure guesswork.

Wren's immediate future now seemed assured and straightforward: there was the building of the Sheldonian Theatre, there was his Deputy-Surveyorship; and the continuing Savillian Professorship and the meetings of the Royal Society. But great events intervened, and the whole course of his life was suddenly changed. In 1665 came the Plague, or Black Death; and the next year London was devastated by fire.

For some reason which we do not know, Wren had been invited by the Earl of St. Albans, our Ambassador at the French Court, to visit him in Paris during the summer of 1665. Wren accepted the invitation, and was away for six months. We can never be too thankful for this. Firstly, his health

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was none too good, and he might have fallen a victim to the Plague; secondly, the visit to Paris proved the great turning point of his career.

In England he had seen plenty of Gothic, or "pointed," architecture, and it had left him unmoved. In France he was suddenly confronted with styles of building such he had never dreamed of, and his excitement was unbounded. News and gossip of architecture buzzed throughout the artistic world and the talk was all of columns, entablatures, porticoes and domes. Mansard was in Paris with his new ideas; Bernini, who had just completed the piazza of St. Peter's in Rome, was building the Louvre, and, said Wren, "Bernini's design of the Louvre I would have given my skin for; but the old reserved Italian gave me but a few minutes' view." The unfinished palace Wren described as "the best school of building in the world." His mind leaped in response to Classical and Renaissance ideas. Columns and porticoes were not unknown to him, for Inigo Jones had been using them, but domes were something fresh, and these unfamiliar architectural shapes were the sparks that fired his creative powers. As one biographer has put it, "He dreamed of domes." Wren visited Versailles, Vaux, Chantilly and other great châteaux, and returned to England, enthusiastically bearing "almost all France on paper."

While he was in this awakened sensitised condition the Great Fire swept through London and destroyed five-sixths of the City. For four days and four nights the conflagration raged—and smouldered for another month. But within a week of the outbreak Wren, as Deputy-Surveyor, submitted plans



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for the replanning of London. They were rejected. The expense of such a vast scheme would have been enormous; and, also, people wanted their lost houses, business premises and churches rebuilt on the same sites. London would have been a spacious well-planned City if Wren had had his way; but, on the other hand, much of the past would have been swept away; we should have lost many of the narrow twisting lanes and their little unexpected churchyards that date back to mediæval times and are part of the City's charm today.

Immediately after the Fire, Wren, now Surveyor-General, was commissioned to rebuild St. Paul's and fifty-one of the ninety-eight parish churches that had been affected by the holocaust. Imagine the magnitude of the task! St. Paul's alone would be considered a life's work for one man, but besides this Wren was confronted with sites of varying sizes and often irregular shapes. Some of the churches were only partly ruined, others, completely so. His genius rose to the challenge. The Fire afforded a unique opportunity to try out the new ideas that were seething in his brain, and there seems to have been no limit to the fertility of his imagination: difficulties only stimulated his inventiveness. Not one church did he duplicate, not one steeple; and towers, spires and belfries gradually soared in graceful profusion above prosaic shops and dwelling-houses, making the skyline of London most lovely to behold. Even now, after the war, when so much has been lost, it is possible to gauge the extent of the City by its towers and belfries. (One of the best views is from the Southern Railway as it approaches Charing Cross.)

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But in those days the towers and steeples clustered closely together.

Of course the cost of rebuilding the churches was tremendous. The position then was very much the same as it is today, and it will be interesting to compare our solving of the rebuilding problem with that adopted in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

To help pay for the new churches a tax of 1s. per chaldron (36 bushels, or  $25\frac{1}{2}$  cwt.) was levied on all the coal brought into the Port of London during a certain period. This tax was afterwards raised to 3s. per chaldron; but even so it was only meant to help towards the erection of the bare structures; no furnishing or decoration was to be included. Parishioners did what they could for their own churches, but money was often hard to come by, and building had to be delayed. Most of the steeples were added later, which was a good thing, for by then Wren's powers had attained maturity, and his genius was at its height. St. Mary-le-Bow waited nearly ten years for its steeple to be added to the completed church—it was worth waiting for; St. Bride's waited twenty years—another worth-while delay; and St. Michael, Cornhill, nearly forty.

Wren was always modest in his charges, and saved money for the parishioners whenever he could. His personal activity at this time was astonishing. With St. Paul's, Hampton Court, Kensington Palace, Chelsea Hospital and Greenwich Hospital on hand, and other work at Winchester, Oxford and Cambridge, he managed to devote careful thought and sympathetic treatment to the City churches. It must have taken considerable tact and patience to

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cope with difficult clients in addition to problems of building. A poem by Hugh Chesterman\* amusingly describes the probable state of affairs:

Clever men,  
Like Christopher Wren  
Only occur just now and then.  
No one expects  
In perpetuity  
Architects of his ingenuity.  
No; never a cleverer dipped his pen  
Than clever Sir Christopher—Christopher Wren.  
With his chaste designs  
On classical lines,  
His elegant curves and neat inclines.  
For all day long he'd measure and limn  
Till the ink gave out or the light grew dim.  
And if a Plan  
Seemed rather baroque or too "Queen Anne"  
(As Plans well may)  
He'd take a look at his pattern book  
And do it again a different way.  
And never an hour went by but when  
London needed Sir Christopher Wren.  
"Bride's in Fleet Street lacks a spire,"  
"Mary-le-Bow a nave and choir."  
"Please to send the plans complete  
For a new St. Stephen's, Coleman Street."  
"Pewterers' Hall  
Is far too tall,  
Kindly lower the N.W. wall."  
"Salisbury Square  
Decidedly bare,  
Can you put one of your churches there?"  
"Dome of St. Paul's is not yet done.  
Dean's been waiting since half-past one."

\* "Christopher Wren," from *Kings and Other Things*. Methuen and Co.

## *Oranges and Lemons*

London calling  
From ten till ten;  
London calling  
Christopher Wren.

Some time about 1673 Wren received the honour of knighthood, and a little later was elected President of the Royal Society, which he had helped to found. Very little is known of his domestic life. He was twice married, first in 1669, to Faith Coghill, by whom he had two sons; and after her death in 1676, to Jane Fitzwilliams, the daughter of Lord Litford, who gave him two children, a girl and a boy, and then died in 1679. Of his four children one died at birth. His daughter must have inherited her father's gifts to a certain degree, for she is reputed to have designed the screen in St. Peter-upon-Cornhill. She was devoted to her father; but she died twenty years before him, and was buried in the crypt of St. Paul's, where a memorial in high relief bears witness to her sweet disposition and skill in music.

The years passed: kings and queens succeeded each other—Charles II, James II, William and Mary, Anne, George I, George II—and Wren went on with his work, making London a treasure-house of lovely things. There was much fault-finding over St. Paul's, and finally he was dismissed from his Surveyorship in 1718. But still he went on building. He waived his fee for Greenwich Hospital, saying, "Let me have some share in an act of charity and mercy." And hearing that the parishioners of St. Clement Danes could hardly stand the expense of rebuilding their church, he charged them nothing.

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Yet he was not a rich man: he could ill afford to be generous.

The last work he did for the City churches was the steeple of St. Michael, Cornhill: he was ninety then, and living quietly at Hampton Court Green, but his genius was not exhausted. Once a year he liked to visit St. Paul's and sit quietly under the dome, looking upon the beauty that he and his helpers had created. It was after one of these visits, in February 1723, that he came home and dined at five o'clock as usual, and then, also as usual, slept. But he did not wake again. He rests in the crypt of his own cathedral, under a window in St. Faith's Chapel, near to his daughter, Jane, and on the wall above is the well-known Latin inscription that, translated, reads:

*Beneath lies buried the Founder of this Church and City Christopher Wren who lived more than ninety years not for himself but for the public good. Reader, if you require a monument, look around you.*

\* \* \*

The exteriors of the Wren churches are usually plain and fairly square, with round-headed windows; the material is stone, or red brick with stone facings. The steeples, mostly of Portland stone, are their glory. The elegant structures of St. Mary-le-Bow and St. Bride's, Fleet Street, are Wren's finest work in this respect, but not far behind come the steeples of St. Vedast, Foster Lane; Christchurch, Newgate; St. Dunstan-in-the-East and St. Magnus the Martyr, London Bridge.

Wren employed a large staff of craftsmen—skilled workers in stone, wood, iron, glass—for the interior

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furnishing and decoration of the churches, and chief among the wood-carvers was Grinling Gibbons, the son of an Englishman living in Rotterdam. Born in 1648, he came to England the year after the Great Fire, and was discovered accidentally by John Evelyn on

18th Dec. 1671. This day I first acquainted his Majesty with the incomparable young man, Gibbons, whom I had lately met with in an obscure place by mere accident, as I was walking near a poor solitary thatched house, in a field in our parish, near Sayes Court. I found him shut in; but looking in at the window, I perceived him carving that large cartoon, or crucifix, of Tintoretto, a copy of which I had myself brought from Venice, where the original painting remains. I asked if I might enter; he opened the door civilly to me, and I saw him about such a work as for the curiosity of handling, drawing, and studious exactness, I never had before seen in all my travels. I questioned him why he worked in such an obscure and lonesome place; he told me it was that he might apply himself to his profession without interruption, and wondered not a little how I found him out. I asked if he was unwilling to be made known to some great man, for that I believed it might turn to his profit; he answered he was yet but a beginner, but would not be sorry to sell off that piece; on demanding the price, he said £100. In good earnest, the very frame was worth the money, there being nothing in nature so tender and delicate as the flowers and festoons about it, and yet the work was very strong; in the piece were more than one hundred figures of men, etc. I found he was likewise musical, and very civil, sober, and discreet in his discourse. There was only an old woman in the house. So, desiring leave to visit him sometimes, I went away.

Full of enthusiasm for his protégé, Evelyn interested King Charles II in his carving, and also showed some

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of it to Wren and Pepys when they dined with him one evening.

This was a memorable dinner-party, for it led eventually to the magnificent carving we see in so many of the City churches. Garlands and ribbon-work, elaborate swags of flowers and fruits, conventional designs, and—above all—most enchanting cherubs are the characteristics of Gibbons's work. It has been jokingly suggested that he used himself as a model for the cherubs, so round and amiable was his countenance. There is nothing religious in his designs; but, as we have seen, that was typical of the period in which he lived.

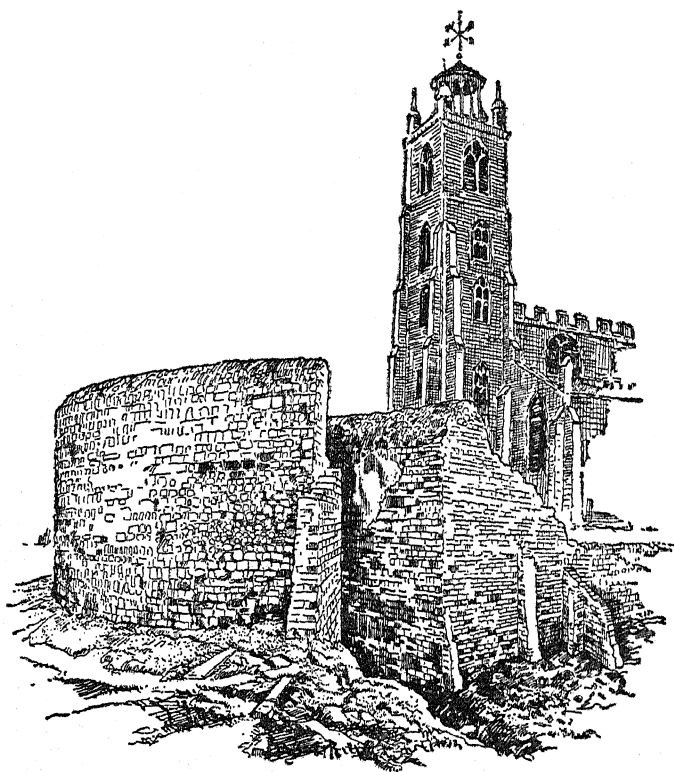
He worked chiefly in lime-wood, but also used oak, pear and box. When he carved a design in low relief he cut it out of the oak itself; but if the relief was to be heavy, he carved the festoons out of lime-wood and then applied them to the oaken background. His signature is a carved pea-pod, and it is interesting to search for this in carvings that adorn the churches and show what was Gibbons's own work and what was done by his assistants. He also worked in bronze and in stone—we shall see some of his marble fonts—and he has been described as "running a decorator's and tomb-maker's business" in later life. This was because, like the other master craftsmen, he employed a large number of assistants. He died in 1721.

Of the other architects whose work we shall come across in the "Oranges and Lemons" churches, James Gibbs was a pupil of Wren, and naturally an admirer of Classical architecture: he also had some training in Rome. George Dance, the elder (to

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distinguish him from his more famous son), was Surveyor to the Corporation of London, and designed the Mansion House as well as various churches. Flitcroft was a pupil of Gibbs, and rose from a carpenter's bench, by way of the Office of the Board of Works, to architecture.

We have filled in the background of "Oranges and Lemons": let us turn now to the churches.

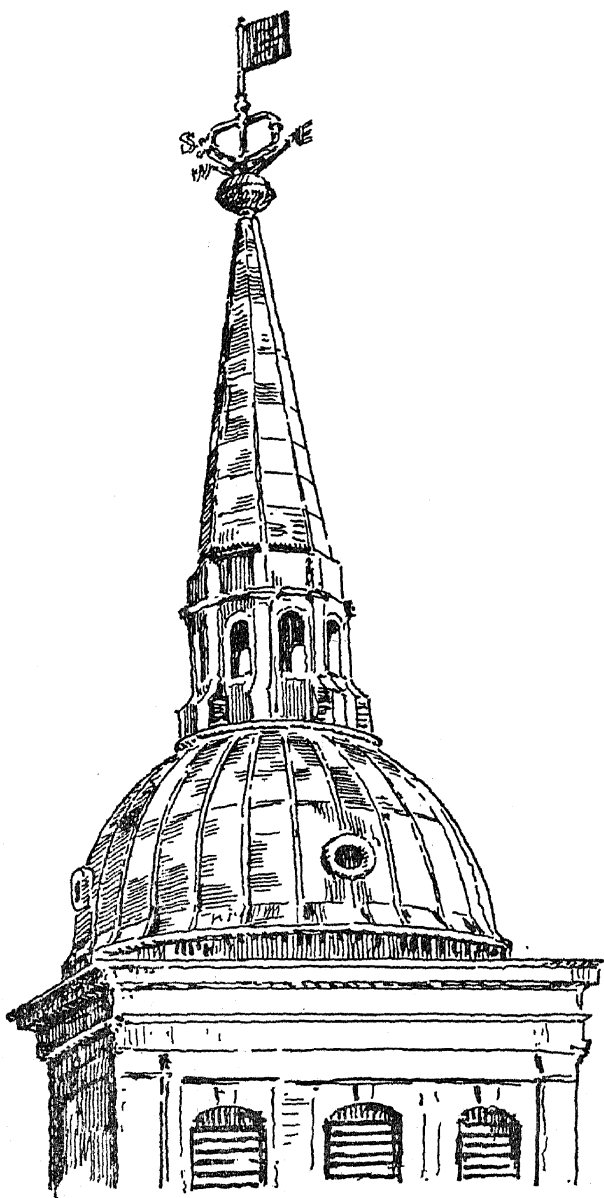


*St. Giles, Cripplegate, and bastion of Roman Wall*



*Part II*

*The Churches*



*Weather vane and steeple of St. Peter's-upon-Cornhill*

*Oranges and lemons,  
Say the bells of St. Clement's*

BOTH churches of St. Clement, off Eastcheap and in the Strand, have at various times claimed to be the original "Oranges and Lemons" church; but for several years before the war St. Clement Danes fostered a cult of the rhyme and the music, and now it is generally recognised as the "Oranges and Lemons" church. Although not within the old City, like its *confrère* in Eastcheap, the church stood on the route taken by the fruit porters on their way to Clare Market, which was quite near. What more natural than that they should pause at St. Clement's to rest on the stone ledges outside and gossip, if not to go inside and pray?

The church stands today an empty shell on its island in the Strand. Round about it the plane trees are green and fresh; outside the west door Mr. Gladstone on his pedestal watches the stream of traffic divide or reunite endlessly before him, and from a shady plot beyond the eastern apse Dr. Johnson, weathered and worn, observes a similar movement. The lovely steeple is intact, but the windows of the church are like sightless eyes beholding nothing of what passes. At one time ragwort

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spread a green and golden carpet over part of the floor. Sunshine pours into the roofless smoke-blackened enclosure; pigeons roosting and sparrows flying through remind one inevitably of the Psalmist's words: "Yea, the sparrow hath found her a house and the swallow a nest where she may lay her young: even thy altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King and my God."

The church will be restored again; this is but another interregnum.\* There was a similar pause before rebuilding in the seventeenth century; but by then St. Clement's already had a long history behind it, going back to the time of the Danes, though the affix "Danes" is of doubtful origin. Stow says the church was so called because Harald, a Danish king and an illegitimate son of Canute, and other Danes were buried there. Another historian declares that "when the Danes were utterly driven out of this kingdom and none left but a few who were married to English women, they were constrained to inhabit between the Isle of Thorne (Westminster) and Caer Lud (Ludgate). And there they builded a synagogue called 'Ecclesia Clementis Danorum.'" Evidently there was at some time a Danish colony in this neighbourhood, for the name of Aldwych close by is of Danish derivation, "ald" signifying old, and "wych" a settlement; and early in the thirteenth century the street in which the church stood was known as "Dencheman's street."

This church of St. Clement Danes was known to

\* The parish has now (1954) been united to that of St. Mary-le-Strand, and when restored the church will be the Royal Air Force church.

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have been in existence in the tenth century, but about its history we have no details; probably it was a small wooden structure. About 1025 it was built again—this time with stone: the round arches of the present tower and the big square stones at the base may be relics of this building. Near the church (where the west end of the Law Courts now stands) was St. Clement's Well, and Fitzstephen (c. 1175) tells us how on summer evenings the youths and scholars of the City used to resort there "when they go out to take the air." Records of St. Clement Danes only begin with Stow's *Survey*, in which he describes repairs undertaken between 1608 and 1633 at a cost of £1,586. The steeple was repaired, and the body of the church covered with roughcast. There is also note of "an extraordinary fine pulpit," "a good organ," "a fine steeple with a good ring of Bells and Chimes to them." The cost of all this was borne by the parishioners. The low square tower from which the steeple rose was used in the Middle Ages as a beacon, with a blazing torch to guide ships on the Thames: the river was much wider then, the Strand was literally the strand or shore, and on this the church stood. The tower also had a cannon on top for quelling riots and dealing with pirates.

The church as Stow knew it escaped the Fire, but being in a ruinous condition was taken down, except for the lower part of the tower, and rebuilt between 1680 and 1688 according to Wren's design—though the work was actually supervised by Edward Pierce. The tower was modified and recased up to the stage above the clock dials; but it was not

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until 1719 that the graceful steeple was completed by James Gibbs. Evelyn greatly admired St. Clement's and called it "that pretty and well-contrived church." Because the parishioners of his day were unable to pay him Wren waived the fee for his work, and to commemorate this kindness a mural monument was erected in the church to "the King's Surveyor" for "freely and generously bestowing his great care and skill." A portico on the south side was removed about 1863; and the site of the church became an "island" in 1810 when houses on the north side, including Butcher's Row, were demolished.

The weather-vane on the steeple is in the form of an anchor, and is the emblem of St. Clement, the third Bishop of Rome. He lived about A.D. 100, and was martyred in the time of the Emperor Trajan, who commanded that the holy man should be tied to an anchor and thrown into the sea. It is not surprising then to find that St. Clement is the chosen saint of ocean-going seamen and of Trinity House, the society founded by Henry VIII for the safety of "those who go down to the sea in ships."

So much that was precious in St. Clement's perished in the Blitz. Gone are the coloured windows, the marble reredos, the font and its angel, the organ, originally built by Father Smith; gone is the panelled blue-and-gold ceiling with its elaborate mouldings and carvings. But the superb pulpit of 1690 has been saved, and will be seen again. It is a masterpiece of Grinling Gibbons's work, and its panels are festooned with flowers so skilfully undercut that their delicacy is lifelike. The old and

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valuable church and parish plate has been saved, too. A good deal of it dates from the seventeenth century, and was transferred from the old church. Two box-wood hammers for the use of the chairman at parish meetings are marked 1577 and 1598 respectively. They bear Queen Elizabeth I's monogram, and "have kept order in the parish for more than 300 years."

And what of the bells? What has happened to them? During the war they were stored in sand at the base of the tower; but when, in the tremendous conflagration that melted so many of the bells of London into shapeless masses of metal, St. Clement Danes caught fire, the firemen played their hoses upon the precious bells and the metal cracked. They will have to be recast before they can be rung again.

Many people will remember the so-called carillon in the tower, which was at one time unique. The barrel was constructed to play three tunes: at 9 a.m. one heard the Easter Hymn, at midday the tune "Hanover," and at 5 p.m. "The Lass o' Gowrie." In 1920 this last melody was changed to the air of "Oranges and Lemons." Its first playing, on March 31st, was celebrated by a children's service, at the end of which each child was presented with an orange and a lemon while the music of the rhyme rang out gaily overhead. This delightful service became an annual affair, and was held right up to the outbreak of war. The devoted Rector, the Rev. William Pennington-Bickford, who planned this and other associations of "Oranges and Lemons," died during the war of shock and grief, and his ashes,

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with those of his equally devoted wife, were interred near the high altar. Harold Adshead mourned for the past in his war-time poem, *On Passing St. Clement Danes*:

Clement Danes stands all forlorn  
And destitute;  
Bells that rang out yestermorn  
Today lie mute.

I hear children in my mind  
All singing there;  
But oranges are hard to find  
And lemons rare.

Shall I ever hear again  
The welcome chime  
Ringing out from Clement Danes  
The ancient rhyme?

Calling little folk to stand  
In happy throng  
Children singing in the Strand  
A merry song?

Let us hope that those happy days will soon come again, and that children will pause in the Strand and listen to "Oranges and Lemons" floating high above the noise of traffic.

Eight of the historic bells dated from 1693, eleven years after Sir Christopher Wren had built the body of the present church. They were cast at Clerkenwell by "Will and Phill" Wightman, who made bells from 1680 to 1702. But the most priceless treasure was the Sanctus bell with a clear silvery note. This formed a link with the famous mediæval foundry at Whitechapel, for it bore the inscription,



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ROBERTUS + MOT + ME + FECIT + 1588. It hung alone in the topmost turret of the tower, where it echoed the striking of the hours in aggravating fashion—apparently to confirm the tenor bell's pronouncement.

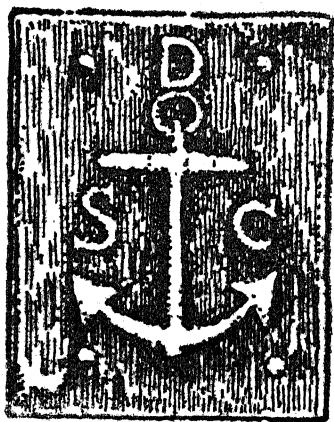
Mot's bell must have been heard by Shakespeare as he walked the streets of London; by Milton, living nearby in St. Bride's Passage, Fleet Street; by Lovelace as he lay dying in poverty in Gunpowder Alley; and by Dr. Johnson, who worshipped regularly at the church. Boswell often accompanied the Doctor, and noted each visit in his *Life of the great man*. On one occasion he wrote: "Good Friday, April 9, 1773. I breakfasted with him on tea and cross buns. . . . He carried me with him to the Church of St. Clement Danes, where he had his seat, and his behaviour was, as I imagined to myself, solemnly devout. I shall never forget the tremulous earnestness with which he pronounced the awful petition in the Litany, 'In the hour of death and in the day of judgement, Good Lord, deliver us!'" Until the church was destroyed, Dr. Johnson's seat in the north gallery next to a pillar was marked by an inscription. It was his custom at sermon-time to rise from his seat and walk to the pulpit, and stand there listening attentively to every word that was spoken. He was a genuinely religious man, devoted to St. Clement Danes, and historians tell us that many of his convictions and promises were due to his attendance there.

In 1913 the bells became silent for the first time in nearly two hundred years; the oaken frame which had borne the tremendous weight of their swinging

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had worked loose, and had to be replaced with a frame of steel. Those heavy bells had rung to welcome every monarch who had visited the City of London from William and Mary onwards; they had pealed for British victories since Ramillies and Malplaquet; and now they remained dumb until the end of the first world war, when the new frame was finished in time for the bells to be rung on Peace Day, 1919. Again this work was done at the White-chapel foundry, this time by the successors of Robert Mot, Messrs. Mears and Stainbank. At the service of their rededication the church was lavishly decorated with flowers and oranges and lemons, and the bells were similarly garlanded.

St. Clement's is one of the few parishes where the ceremony of beating the bounds was carried out until the church was destroyed. In olden times it was very important to be sure of your parish



*Parish Boundary Mark of St. Clement Danes (Strand Lane)*

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boundaries because of the responsibility for vagrants: beggars and women with child were often paid to leave the parish quickly to avoid a charge on the rates. Ascension Day was the day set apart for these annual perambulations, when, after a service in the church and a lunch, the church watch and the vestry sallied forth to beat the bounds. In more modern times the rite was performed by officers of the church, and choirboys provided with long willow wands. The boys beat with the wands on various spots, and the perambulation of St. Clement Danes gives a good idea of the different kinds of boundaries. One place is in Strand Lane, where a small tablet on the wall bears the parish mark of an anchor; another is at the Savoy Hotel, and yet others at the Lyceum Theatre (on the stage, it is said), and in Carey Street. The parish is partly bounded by the Thames, and the party went out in boats to beat the surface of the water. A choirboy was usually bumped on a parish mark in Middle Temple Gardens; and there is another "bounds beat" in New Square, Lincoln's Inn. Parish marks are usually little metal tablets with the initials and emblem of the church and a date in relief. Many still exist, and can be found chiefly at first-floor level on walls.

There are plenty of memorials in our churches to people and events in the long-distant past; but when St. Clement Danes is restored it will house a memorial of our own stirring days for those who will come after us. This is the Victory Tapestry, a strip of needlework 10 feet by 2 feet, divided into seven

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panels. It commemorates the war years and those who steadfastly did their duty through that time. The panels, imaginatively conceived and exquisitely worked, are dedicated to:

- (1) London's Front Line Family, symbolising the ordinary people;
- (2) All Londoners, under the title of "London Pride";
- (3) The Royal Air Force, especially "the Few" who saved us;
- (4) The men and women of the Civil Organisations. This central panel shows the rhyme and music of "Oranges and Lemons," evacuated children playing in the country, and the ruined church of St. Clement Danes;
- (5) The Royal Navy and the Merchant Navy;
- (6) Our Allies, of whatever nation or creed;
- (7) The British Army.

The tapestry has a romantic history. It was planned and begun as a sampler depicting the Front Line Family of the Robinsons, familiar to B.B.C. listeners during the war. The needlewoman was one of the cast, and sewed at her sampler in between rehearsals and shows. As the embroidery progressed fresh ideas suggested themselves to enlarge the tapestry so that it would include all aspects of the war against oppression. After overcoming very great difficulties in obtaining materials, after working in air-raid shelters, theatrical dressing-rooms, blacked-out trains, and under other abnormal conditions, the artist completed the panels. She presented the tapestry to the Bishop of London's Reconstruction Fund, and it will hang in the rebuilt church of St. Clement Danes.

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St. Clement's other church is in Clement Lane, off Eastcheap. For more than a thousand years a church has stood here. The first was mentioned in the Conqueror's time, and this is the third on the site. It was rebuilt after the Fire, between 1683 and 1687, according to Wren's plans, and the grateful parishioners presented him with one-third of a hogshead of wine in token of their satisfaction.

All that remains of the previous church is the base of both the tower and the south arcade wall. From the outside the building is a plain and inconspicuous rectangle: the walls are of brick covered by cement, and are very dingy—a fact which makes the interior a most pleasant surprise. St. Clement's, like many other churches, suffered at the hands of Victorian restorers, but their mistakes have been largely rectified, and the result is a beautiful interior lovingly cared for, and an atmosphere of devotion.

The reredos catches the eye first. Formerly this panelling was split and separated into three bays, but these have been reassembled and joined together. The old deal panels inscribed with the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and Ten Commandments have been removed, and in their place are painted panels depicting in the centre St. Clement and St. Martin, patron saints of the united parishes (St. Martin Orgar was added after the Fire); and at the sides the angel Gabriel and the Virgin Mary in the Annunciation. With its shining gold, its gesso-work and colours, the reredos is magnificent, and unequalled in the City churches.

The lovely pulpit is hexagonal in shape, and each

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elliptical panel is surrounded by elaborate mouldings. The great sounding-board above is a joyous creation, exuberant with cherubs, scrolls and festoons. Surely it should bear Grinling Gibbons's signature of a pea-pod? It is described as "probably" his work. Formerly a beautiful semi-circular staircase and platform led up to the pulpit, but they disappeared in the "restorations." Renatus Harris built the organ whose gilded pipes over the west porch seem to catch and reflect the gold of the flood-lit reredos at the eastern end.

Some years ago the roof was attacked by the death-watch beetle, and the whole ceiling had to be removed. It says much for the care and skill of those who did the job that, in spite of removal and replacement, the lovely sculptured wreath of flowers in the centre remained intact. At the west end stands the font. It has a beautifully carved oaken cover adorned with cherubs, and inside the space made by eight curving brackets is the figure of a dove. Cherubs also support the four corners of the oaken altar (though they are concealed by liturgical hangings). The church possesses fine examples of old carved breadshelves from which loaves were distributed to the poor.

In the vestry is a chimney-piece that is, again, "probably" the work of Gibbons: whether this is so or not, it is a beautiful object. Some of the church plate is very old. One silver-gilt flagon is dated 1672, another 1683, and round about this later date belong two chalices and patens, one bread-stand, two plates and a magnificent alms-dish. As so often in the City churches, the registers go back a long way—

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in this case to 1539—and the Churchwardens' Accounts even farther back—to 1471. These valuable documents are kept in the Guildhall Library.

At one time it was the usual custom to repair to the church instead of the law courts to settle quarrels, and these reconciliations were duly recorded in the parish books. One entry in 1692 tells how John Hall left to the Weavers' Company a dwelling-house, directing that out of the rent 10s. a year should be given to the church of St. Clement, Eastcheap, to provide on the Thursday night before Easter two turkeys for the parishioners on the occasion of the annual reconciling or Love Feasts for the settlement of disputes and wrangling.

The list of St. Clement's rectors is an unbroken record from 1307, and three famous theologians are included. That quaint writer, Fuller, who tried to make peace between King and Parliament in 1642, was a lecturer here. It was in the old church, described by Stow as "small" and "void of ornaments," that Pearson, afterwards Bishop of Chester, preached week by week, from 1654 until the Restoration, those sermons which he later embodied in his famous *Exposition of the Creed*, the most perfect and complete production of English dogmatic theology. John Evelyn came to hear him one afternoon in 1655 when the sermon "was disturb'd by an alarm of fire, which about this time was very frequent in the cittie." For these sermons Pearson received no payment, but he dedicated the *Exposition* to the "Right Worshipful the well-beloved the parishioners of St. Clement's, Eastcheap." Brian Walton, the

### *Oranges and Lemons*

learned compiler of the Polyglot Bible in 1657, was rector of St. Martin Orgar near by.

The church has been fortunate in the matter of musicians. Edward Purcell, son of the great composer, played the organ here in the eighteenth century. Jonathan Battishill, whose chants and anthems are still in use, was organist here for some time; and in more recent days Dr. C. W. Pearce held that post.



*Bulls'-eyes and targets,  
Say the bells of St. Marg'ret's*

ONLY two churches remain to share the dedication to the virgin of Antioch. Not much is known about the lady beyond the fact that she refused to offer sacrifices to the heathen gods of the Romans in the fourth century. Raphael has depicted her as overcoming a dragon, and an old story says that she was being swallowed whole by the creature when her cross stuck in his throat and he burst.

St. Margaret, Lothbury, and St. Margaret Pattens are her two churches: St. Margaret, Westminster, is too far from the City to be considered. Formerly there were also St. Margaret, Fish Street, close to where the Monument stands, and St. Margaret Moses, or Moyse, in Friday Street, probably called after its founder, and mentioned in 1256. These churches were not rebuilt after the Fire.

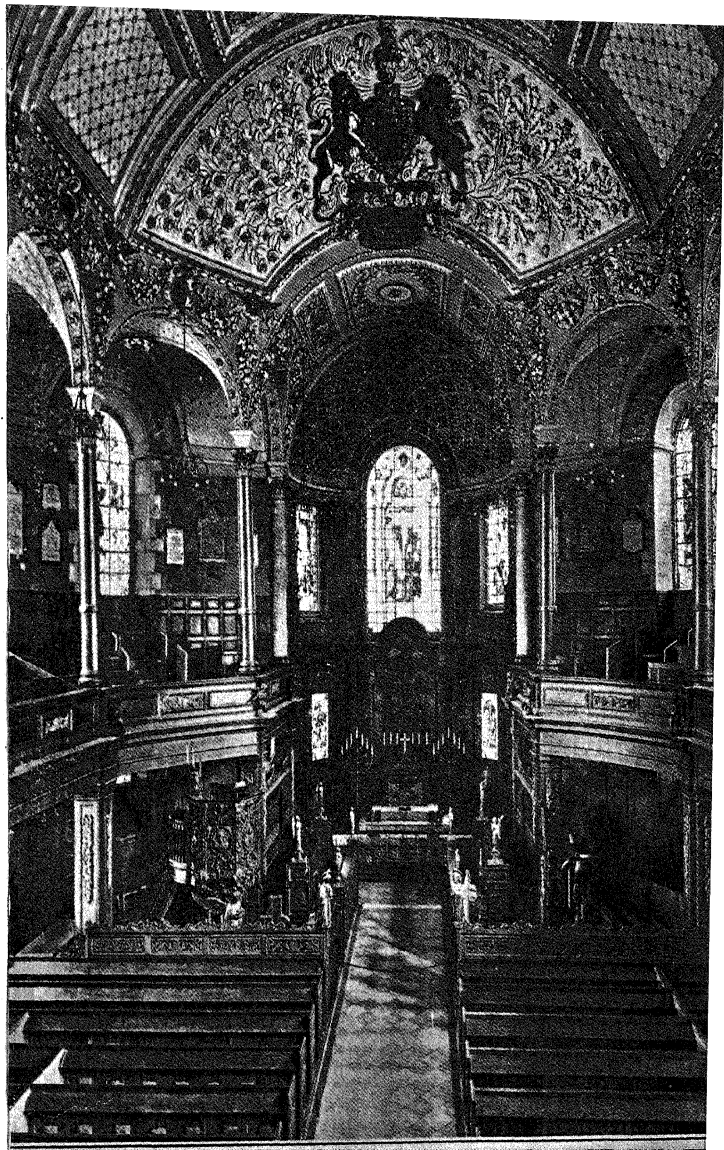
Lothbury is a dignified thoroughfare that runs at the back of the Bank of England, and St. Margaret's, on the north side, is rather overwhelmed by the massive walls of the Bank and by its impressive satellites. But here is a picture of Lothbury in the sixteenth century: "This streete is possessed for the most part by Founders that cast Candlesticks,

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Chafingdishes, Spice mortars and suchlike copper or Laton workes, and do afterwards turn them with the foot and not with the wheele to make them smooth and bright with turning and scrating . . . making a loathsome noice to the by-passers that have not been used to the like, and therefore by them disdainedly called Lothberie." (Originally the street had taken the name of a Berie or Court of the olden times.) But there were also some large merchants' houses on the south side among the Founders, and their inhabitants must have grown so accustomed to the "loathsome noice" that they did not mind it.

There was a church on this site long, long ago: the list of rectors goes back to the reign of Henry II when, in 1185, a certain Reginald the Priest was in charge. St. Margaret's was rebuilt in 1440, repaired in 1621, and must have been very severely damaged in the Fire. As parts of the present walls have been found to be mediæval in structure and composition, it is clear that the building was not entirely destroyed. The present church was not completed until 1689, perhaps because of financial difficulties, and it is possible that during that long interval services were carried on in part of the old building.

With the passage of time St. Margaret's has gradually absorbed six other parishes whose churches have been demolished. St. Christopher-le-Stocks (rebuilt by Wren in 1666) stood on what is now the south-west corner of the Bank, and the stocks, dreaded punishment of evil-doers, were under the tall square church tower. In 1780, at the time of the Gordon Riots, the directors of the Bank realised that if hostile forces occupied this tower they could



*Former Interior of St. Clement Danes*



*Interior of St. Ethelburga's Church:  
example of a mediæval interior  
(pews are of later date)*

## *Oranges and Lemons*

command the whole Bank. A petition was accordingly submitted for the destruction of the church. This was granted, and all that now remains of the site is the small garden within the premises of the Bank. It comes as a surprise, this open space in the heart of the massive building: there are lawns crossed by paths, little trees, and stone troughs filled with flowers—all of which create a pleasant oasis.

St. Mildred in the Poultry survived until 1872. It was the last resting-place of Thomas Tusser (born 1515), who wrote the popular *Poyntes of Husbandrie*. St. Mary Colechurch, at the bottom of Ironmonger Lane, was swept away by the Fire; so was St. Martin Pomary, which stood in the same lane. St. Bartholomew by the Exchange, a Wren church, was demolished in 1840 because its site was too valuable for a mere church to stand upon; and St. Olave Jewry, also by Wren, was pulled down in 1885 after it had become very shabby. St. Margaret has thus acquired a goodly family of other saints, and their portraits are shown in stone medallions on the reredos above the high altar.

Undoubtedly the most striking feature of this small and mellow church is the open chancel screen, a superb piece of seventeenth-century carving with slender twisted columns. The central doorway is surmounted by an eagle with outspread wings, and there are two eaglets on either side. Originally the central arch was surmounted by the royal arms, but these proved too heavy for the supporting columns, so they were removed to the centre of the organ gallery at the west end, and a modern, richly carved cross was suspended in the middle opening instead.

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Controversy has raged round this screen. It was brought here in 1894 from the church of All Hallows the Great in Upper Thames Street, which was demolished in that year, and before that its history is obscure. Some authorities declared that it was made in Hamburg, and was the gift of Dutch merchants; others professed to recognise in the eagle of the screen the crest of the Hanseatic League, and deduced that the Hanseatic merchants of the Steelyard, who worshipped at All Hallows, gave the screen to the church. But the truth seems to be that the parishioners had always wanted a screen but could not afford one; and that the brothers Theodore and Jacob Jacobsen, German merchants residing in the parish, came to the rescue and presented the screen in 1689.

St. Margaret's would seem to be a home for stray gifts. Also from All Hallows came the eighteenth-century brass candelabrum in the sanctuary. The small gilded cross on the south side of the sanctuary is made of a piece of oak from old St. Paul's; and the paintings of Moses and Aaron are a legacy from St. Christopher-le-Stocks together with the fine bronze bust of Sir Peter le Maire, a benefactor of that church, who died in 1631. This is supposed to be the work of Hubert le Sueur, who modelled the statue of Charles I at Charing Cross.

On the pulpit and its canopy the carving is exquisite, and one recognises with delight the pea-pod signature of Grinling Gibbons. The canopy, decorated with figures holding garlands of flowers, came from All Hallows. There is more lovely carving on panel-borders of the western screen and organ

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gallery above. A colonnade of slim Corinthian columns sets apart the Lady Chapel on the south side, and here at the western end is something of St. Margaret's very own—the font of white, semi-translucent marble, which may or may not be the work of Gibbons. It is carved with most adorable cherubs, and, in between them, four scenes in low relief—the Ark, the Baptism of our Lord, the Temptation of Adam and Eve, the Baptism of the Ethiopian Eunuch. Every detail of this work gives one intense pleasure; it is so perfect. The cover of dark wood holds, within its carving of leafy supports and yet more cherubs, the figure of a dove.

The royal arms, seen here on the western gallery, are found in all the City churches, and at first it is difficult to guess the significance of their presence, and their connection with religion. Actually, they denote a change of government in this country. At the Restoration, after the Commonwealth had come to an end, many churches displayed the royal coat-of-arms to show their submission to the King's authority as Head of the Church of England. These heraldic bearings are exhibited in many different ways—sometimes painted on a flat surface, sometimes beautifully carved, dark with age and polished, sometimes gilded, or carved and gilded and coloured—the variety seems endless; but always they will be found in one guise or another.

There are two fine sword-rests of the late eighteenth century, and an iron muniment chest with a complicated lock that covers the whole interior of the lid. Many memorials are affixed to the walls, but the most famous citizen of the parish is not

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remembered there. That was a Mercer, Sir Hugh Clopton, who built the lovely old Clopton Bridge across the river at Stratford-on-Avon in 1492—a bridge that is still in use—and rebuilt the parish church and Guild chapel there. He was also a great benefactor to the City of London, and was successively Alderman, Sheriff and Mayor. When he died in 1496 he was buried in the small churchyard of St. Margaret's, although a fine tomb had been prepared for him at Stratford.

The most notable person to be born in the parish was Thomas à Becket.



St. Margaret Pattens stands in Eastcheap, at the corner of Rood Lane, which was so named from a crucifix that stood in the churchyard. The designation of the church has been explained in various ways. According to some authorities, it was derived from the making and selling of pattens in Rood Lane. According to others, the church was named after a probable benefactor long before pattens were in common use: it appeared as St. Margaret Patyns in the reign of King John. It has also been suggested that "pattens" is a corruption of "pans" (*ad patinas*), and that the church was built on the site of a former market for pots and pans; Eastcheap was, of course, a large market at one time. Yet another explanation, simple and likely, is that the church is dedicated to St. Margaret with the Paten.

The first solution is the most popular, and an old notice in the porch for many years ran: "Will the Women remove their pattens before entering the



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Church, and the Men wipe their shoes on the mat." The Worshipful Company of Pattenmakers hold an annual service here during the Octave of the Epiphany, and their past masters are commemorated on the walls. The Basketmakers are also associated with St. Margaret's.

The Livery Companies of London form a strong historic link with the past. With the Merchant Adventurers and the mercantile marine they helped to found our foreign trade. They created and maintained a high standard of workmanship which gave us a good reputation in other countries. In the City their influence was tremendous: they controlled trade and apprenticeships, and looked after the physical and religious welfare of their members. During the Middle Ages each trade was in the hands of its Company, and London was largely governed by these Merchant Guilds. Today they still carry on their good work, supporting schools and almshouses, technical education and scientific research.

Up to the outbreak of war there were seventy-eight Livery Companies, great and small. The Pattenmakers are one of the minor Companies, but they are also one of the most romantic. The "misterie," or art, of "Patynmakers" was first mentioned in City records in 1379, and soon afterwards it was combined with the mysteries of the Pouchemakers and Galochemakers. "Galoche" and "patten" are both derived from Old French, and it is possible that they were introduced into this country by the Normans. Both were originally wooden clogs with a leather strap or fastening, but it may be that pattens had then, as later, an iron ring fixed under

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the sole to raise it. In 1517 the Pouchemakers joined the Leathersellers, and the other two mysteries combined as Pattenmakers. By that time London had grown into a great and thriving city; but the condition of its streets left much to be desired, and pattens were worn by all classes: trade was good for



*The Worshipful Company of Pattenmakers' Coat-of-Arms*

pattenmakers. Then in 1670 Charles II granted a charter to the Company; and in 1717 it was granted a Livery by the Court of Aldermen. Not, be it noted, clothes or full dress, though at one time they were included: a Livery is that part of a Company from which its governing body, the Court of Assistants, is chosen. The Livery of the Pattenmakers numbers 150, and admission to the freedom of the Company—as of other Companies—is by patrimony, servitude or redemption—in modern parlance, inheritance, apprenticeship or purchase.

Owing to pavements and better-made streets the use of pattens declined, and the trade finally died out; there are no pattenmakers today. But mark how the wheel has turned full circle! The Pattenmakers are now associated with manufacturers of goloshes and other rubber footwear, and

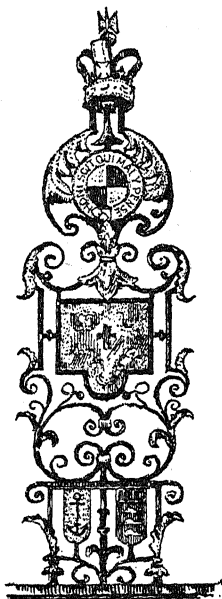
## *Oranges and Lemons*

representatives of those trades are admitted to the freedom and livery of the Company. It really amounts to a reunion of the Pattenmakers and Galochemakers. And, as in olden times, members of the Company make tours of inspection in certain big cities, and award medals and diplomas for specially good work done in those trades.

The Company administers its charities, and functions socially (at the Tallowchandlers' Hall); strong bonds knit together the members of all these fraternities. Among the Pattenmakers' treasures are an old Armada chest of inlaid mahogany and an eighteenth-century loving-cup. A Cromwellian chalice bears the arms of the Company—shoemakers' leather-cutters, knives, and three pattens in a wreath, surmounted by a patten: the motto translated reads: "Women receive support from us."

A church stood in Rood Lane in the time of Henry I, and was rebuilt about 1538. That edifice was destroyed in the Fire, and was rebuilt by Wren in 1687. The exterior is dull and unpromising save for the tapering leaden spire, which is a landmark in this part of the City. It is supported by a well-proportioned stone tower with pinnacles, and in its slender elegance is more nearly Gothic than any other of Wren's steeples. In height St. Margaret Patten's spire ranks as his third tallest, the two others being St. Bride's, Fleet Street, and St. Mary-le-Bow.

Inside, the church is severe but satisfying. A broad nave is separated by three Corinthian columns from an aisle on the north side; and a gallery containing the organ and displaying the royal coat-of-



*Sword-rest in St. Margaret Pattens*

arms curves over this aisle and across the western end. The royal arms seem to hold together two remarkable structures. These are tall, roomy churchwardens' pews, carved and canopied and decorated, one with the figure of a lion, the other with a unicorn. They are the only canopied pews in London, and one of them is supposed to have been the family pew of Sir Christopher Wren; the letters "C. W." are inlaid on the ceiling. Some authorities maintain that these seats were originally "shriving pews," i.e. pews in which penitents sat while waiting their turn to go up to the confessional (that then stood in or near the chancel) and be shriven. References to shriving pews exist in the records of four

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post-Reformation churches in London—St. Mary-at-Hill, St. Andrew Hubbard, St. Michael, Cornhill, and St. Margaret Pattens, where the entries run:

1511 (St. Margaret Pattens) a clothe for Lent, to hang the screvyng pewe

1515 Dressyng the yrons of the shrevyng pew  
...jd.

Whether the present pews are those referred to in 1515 no one can say, but it seems quite possible.

How old customs spring to life in church furniture! Besides the shriving pews there is a beadle's pew in St. Margaret's. High, spacious and comfortable, it is a typical Wren pew with a border of beautiful carving. Here sat the watchful beadle with his long wand, ready to lean over and tap smartly the head of any unlucky wight who might snore during the interminable sermon, and rap those who fidgeted or otherwise misbehaved. An hour-glass (still preserved) stood on the pulpit ledge to make sure that the preacher's homily reached its allotted span. The tips of the beadles' staves were often ornamented with a silver statuette or mitre or emblem of a saint: they are now carried by vergers in processions. There is yet another kind of seat in the church—the punishment bench with a devil's head on the back. This is more than three hundred years old, and one wonders who sat on it, and for what misdemeanours.

A gilt cross standing on a bracket formerly topped the steeple, but was taken down because it was considered unsafe. It has foliated arms, and is a small replica of the cross above St. Paul's. Wren some-

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times tried out his ideas for the cathedral on the City churches, and this is a case in point. The steeple of St. Bride's resembles his original plan of a steeple for St. Paul's, and the lovely domed ceiling of St. Stephen's, Walbrook, is supposed to have been a preliminary study for the dome of the cathedral.

Other valued possessions of St. Margaret's include very old sanctuary chairs, a sword-rest, and a lectern with the unusual design of an eagle grasping a serpent. There are many memorials on the walls dating from the seventeenth century onwards; and the panelling of the walls has been utilised for modern memorials. The simple gilt-lettered inscriptions or small inset brass plates are a most seemly and dignified form of remembrance.

*Brickbats and tiles,  
Say the bells of St. Giles*

ST. Giles-without-Cripplegate (to give the church its proper designation) stands in the midst of desolation like some proud lonely fortress defying time and destruction. Hereabouts the Blitz on the City was heaviest; acres of buildings were burnt and razed to the ground, and now round about the church there stretches a wide area of open weed-grown cellars, with low temporary brick walls keeping the narrow City streets and lanes properly defined. Here and there a gaunt wall stands up, or part of a blank-windowed warehouse. It is a barren no-man's-land, and from the church one can look across to the towers of ruined St. Alban's, Wood Street, and St. Mary Aldermanbury, to the elegant steeple of St. Mary-le-Bow and the great grey dome of St. Paul's. It must be a very long time since St. Giles had even a nodding acquaintance with these landmarks; so many buildings stood between.

From a distance the church appears untouched. There stand the long battlemented stone walls of nave and aisles with their Perpendicular windows, there stands the square tower, its upper part of dark red brick topped by an open bell-turret in the centre

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and a pinnacle at each corner. The stone looks fresh and clean: surely St. Giles's cannot have been burnt?

But the interior tells a different story. After the Blitz it was a bare and blackened shell; only the walls and pillars remained. Bits of stained glass hung like tattered rags in the empty windows, the wall monuments that survived were scarred and blackened and dusty, the calcined columns had to be reinforced by brick. Now the work of reconstruction is proceeding amidst a forest of scaffolding, and it is hoped that very soon the church will be ready for worship once more. A new barrel roof of oak curves gently above the nave, and oak will roof the side aisles also; the slender clustered columns have been strengthened; clear glass in the spacious windows and plaster on the walls give the church an air of light and cheerfulness.

From this new-looking, bare interior one would never suspect the long and interesting past that stretches behind St. Giles's. Let us clothe it in the history that belongs to it; let us deck it with associations and memories.

Crepel-gate was one of the posterns in the Roman wall of London. Its actual date is uncertain, but tradition says that in A.D. 946 the body of Edmund, King of the East Anglians, saint and martyr, was carried from Edmundsbury to London, through Crepel-gate to the church of St. Gregory-by-Paul. The postern is mentioned in the charter that William I granted to confirm the foundation of St. Martin-le-Grand, but it was not of great importance. The gatehouse was used as a prison for debtors and offenders in a small way, and was rebuilt in 1244 and



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again in 1491. In 1766 it was sold for a mere song, to be demolished and used as building material.

In 1090 Alfune (who collaborated with Rahere in founding St. Bartholomew's Hospital and Priory) built a church outside Cripplegate, and dedicated it to St. Giles, the patron saints of cripples. Lame folk used to congregate outside the church and beg alms; and a rich harvest they must have reaped, considering the number of travellers that passed through the gate, going into or out of the City. Since that distant date St. Giles's has undergone many vicissitudes. The first structure was rebuilt towards the end of the fourteenth century. Then, in 1545, "the xij day of September, in the Mornynge, above five of the klocke, was Saynt Giles Church burned belles and alle, without Crepellgate." After this disaster it was rebuilt as it now stands. Its solid strong appearance and the battlemented walls remind us that churches were at one time fortresses as well as places of worship, and that people flocked to them for refuge against attack.

St. Giles's narrowly escaped the Great Fire in 1666: very much later, in 1897, the roof was badly damaged by a serious fire in Cripplegate. It was the first church to be hit by a bomb in the 1914-18 war; and having come through all these disasters it was completely gutted by fire in 1940 when incendiary bombs were dropped on the City. Three times St. Giles was attacked from the air; and it says much for the ancient builders and their material that the stone fabric has survived so splendidly. St. Giles, Cripplegate, and St. Andrew Undershaft are the latest of the City's mediæval churches, and both have

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this unusual feature in common: they were not built by wealthy individuals but by the united subscriptions of their own parishioners.

In the churchyard long ago there was a pool, the water from which cured sore eyes miraculously until, as Stow says: "I read in the year 1244 that Anne of Lodburie [Lothbury] was drowned therein, this pool is now for the most part stopped up, but the spring is preserved and was cooped about with stone by the Executors of Richard Whittington." This was only one minor instance of Whittington's benefactions to the City. There is no trace left of the wonder-working pool, but its spring, seeping through the graveyard to the pump that replaced it, may have been responsible for the high death-rate in the parish during the Plague. A pit was dug in the churchyard, into which corpses were flung wholesale during the Black Death of 1665 because there was neither time nor labour for individual burial. On one August day alone 263 burials were recorded at St. Giles's. Daniel Defoe, who belonged to the parish, referred to this pit in his realistic book *A Journal of the Plague Year*.

St. Giles's was only *just* "without Cripplegate," and a bastion of the Roman wall that surrounded the City can be seen at one corner of the churchyard. This structure, now seeming so insignificant, is a mere 10 feet or so high, and is, of course, only the topmost part of the tower, the part from which a sentry would look out over the wild country that lay outside Londinium; the remaining bulk of the bastion lies buried to a depth of about 20 feet below the accumulation of centuries of mud, dust, filth and

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rubbish that has gradually raised the soil to its present level. The wall was a formidable defence; it must have been 20 to 35 feet in height, and anything from 8 feet thick. We have no history of its making, but because the rough masonry of its lowest part shows the same kind of workmanship throughout, it is surmised that thousands of labourers and slaves were employed to build it quickly. The work was probably carried out between A.D. 340 and 360; and a wide ditch before the wall gave additional defence.

Roman building is recognisable in the lower parts consisting of large rough stones mortared together, and in the bonding course of red tiles that make a streak of colour in the grey masonry. Here and there yellow tiles were used instead of red; and most of the Roman work is now underground. Norman and mediæval builders added more on top of this—perhaps to retain the necessary height while ground level was slowly rising—and at a still later date brickwork was added. This, with its suggestion of battlements, can be seen by the former churchyard of St. Alphage, London Wall, not far from St. Giles.

In 1766 the Commissioners of Sewers obtained permission to demolish the wall, pleading that by blocking passages and preventing the free circulation of air it was affecting the health of the City. House-breakers got busy, and soon London ceased to be a walled city. But a few other fragments of the ancient fortification remain, notably near the Tower—at Trinity Place and in Messrs. Barber's Bonded Warehouse in Trinity Square. And in the basement of 42 Trinity Square, the property of Toc H, a

## *Oranges and Lemons*

section, complete from foundations to summit, is carefully preserved.

St. Giles's and its bastion have outlived the general destruction of the wall; and the patronage of the saint is still extended to cripples. He is seen with his hind in a carving above the north porch. St. Giles was born in Athens, of royal parents, and about A.D. 666 went to France. Though learned in theology and medicine, he had a desire for a solitary life, and took up his abode in a forest of Provence. The legend goes that the king of the Goths was hunting there one day, and the hind he was pursuing took refuge in the saint's cave. The holy man's prayers kept the dogs off, and in gratitude the hind provided nourishment for her protector. Thus it comes about that St. Giles is the patron saint of maternity as well as of cripples.

His church at Cripplegate is built in the usual Gothic style of nave and side-aisles, separated by clustered columns that support pointed arches. The proportions of the building are unexpectedly irregular. The west end is 4 feet wider than the east end; the chancel is not in line with the nave; nor is the nave in line with the porch of the tower. This is just another pleasing example of mediæval builders achieving beauty and vitality through irregularity. Can it be that the dullness of some present-day building is due to absolute precision? That mechanical perfection in architecture destroys beauty?

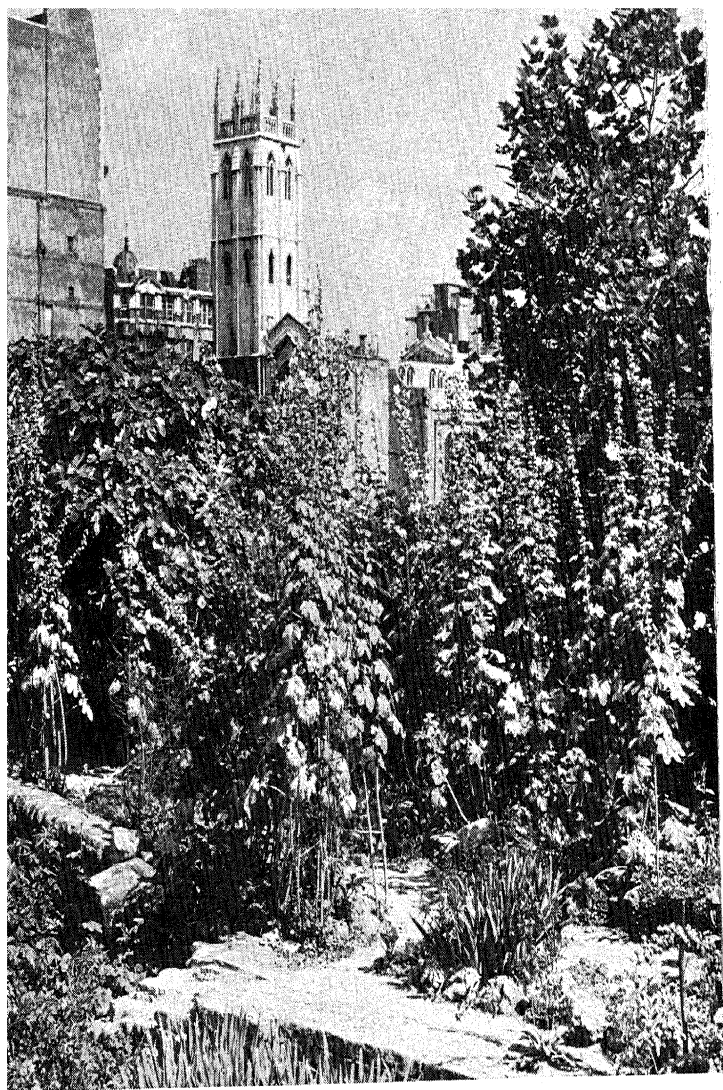
In 1624 galleries were erected in the aisles, but these were removed later. The brick upper storey was added to the stone tower about 1682, giving it a rather patched-up appearance. This addition



*Sir Christopher Wren, 1632–1723, from  
the painting by Sir G. Kneller*



*Interior of St. Helen's Church, Bishopsgate 18th  
century): the "Westminster Abbey" of the City*



*The site of St. John Zachary, Gresham Street,  
with St. Alban's Church Tower*

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enclosed the mediæval belfry windows, and was crowned by a cupola. There is no record of the early bells, but in 1794 a poor workman constructed a carillon which was set up in the tower, and played a remarkable repertoire of tunes daily at 9.0 a.m., 3.0 and 9.0 p.m. On Sunday the parishioners were treated to the Easter hymn, and on Monday to "God save the King." Tuesday gave them "Auld Lang Syne," and Wednesday the tune "Hanover." On Thursday they listened to "Caller Herrin'"; Friday produced "The Mariners' Hymn," and Saturday "Home, Sweet Home." One wonders what the reactions of local residents were to this torrent of aerial music. The twelve bells of the peal were rehung in 1908, two being recast. Four of these melted away in the fire of the Blitz; the other eight are badly cracked, and lie on the floor of the tower at present. But the bell-turret has been rebuilt in readiness to receive them after recasting, and the carillon is to be restored as well.

Treasures of the church that have been saved include the lectern, two sword-rests, and the parish registers which contain entries of special interest, one being the marriage of Oliver Cromwell to Elizabeth, the daughter of Sir James Bourchier, in 1620, when the future Protector was twenty-one. How difficult it is to imagine this stern man as a youthful and perhaps even gay young bridegroom! John Foxe, who wrote *The Book of Martyrs*, was buried here, as was also Sir Martin Frobisher, that gallant Elizabethan adventurer by sea. A blackened memorial reminds us of John Speed, the famous map-maker, who wrote a *History of Britain* before

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his death in 1629. His memorial, with all those saved from the fire, will eventually be placed in the church tower.

It is a pity that the monument to Constance Whitney (granddaughter of Shakespeare's Sir Thomas Lucy) has been destroyed. She was depicted rising from her coffin at the Last Trump with her hands upraised and a somewhat surprised expression on her face. A story ran that when she lay in her coffin before being buried, the sexton tried to pull a ring off her finger, and that woke the damsel, who was not dead at all. She sat up and scared the avaricious man. Although this memorial is no more, a similar one in Chelsea Church—probably by the same sculptor—has been saved.

Lancelot Andrewes, Bishop of Salisbury, and then of Winchester, who died in 1626, was vicar here for seventeen years; but pride of place goes to John Milton, who, as his canopied monument tells us, "was born Dec. 1608, Died Nov. 1674. His Father John Milton, died March 1646. They are both interred in this Church." But Milton the younger did not attain the dignity of this monument at once. At his burial the body was placed under the clerk's desk; and in 1681 Aubrey, the seventeenth-century historian, wrote: "His [Milton's] stone is now removed about two years hence. The two steppes to the communion table were rayssed. I ghesse Jo Speed and he lie together."

There is a gruesome story that the grave was opened in 1793, and the body exhibited "for prices declining from 6d. to a pot of beer." But it is more than likely that the body was not Milton's, and that



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the men who conceived this horrible idea were simply out to make money. For many years there was no kind of memorial to the poet. Then Samuel Whitbread, the brewer, realised the state of affairs and came to the rescue. At his own expense, in 1793, he commissioned the celebrated sculptor, Bacon, to make a bust of Milton, which was then set up in the church. Fortunately this has been preserved in the crypt of St. Mary-le-Bow.

The statue of the poet which formerly stood outside the church was subjected to rough treatment during the war. It was blasted off its pedestal during the first bombing, replaced, and blown down again. In the best air-raid warden fashion it was then given a tin hat to wear. But once more it was blown down, and this time was found lying with (it is said) keys in one hand and a collection bag in the other. Much begrimed, it was then relegated to the porch along with the cracked bells. Now it has gone to be repaired, and in due time will stand on a new plinth in its old position by the north door.



There is another church of St. Giles which, though it cannot be ranked as a City church, yet has some connection with "Oranges and Lemons." This is St. Giles-in-the-Fields, that stands with its churchyard on a triangular island in a network of streets at the north-east end of Charing Cross Road.

When Matilda, Queen of Henry I, built a hospital for lepers here in 1101, with a dedication to St. Giles, it was situated in green fields some distance from London City. This hospital was not always

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restricted to its original purpose: during Edward II's reign healthy people also were admitted as residents, and old servants of the Court found a refuge here—until the King forbade it unless a licence was first obtained from the Master and brethren of the institution. The property of the hospital extended for about eight acres, and included an oratory or small chapel, a great gate and a chapter-house. The establishment grew so wealthy that it attracted the notice of Henry VIII, and consequently was dissolved in 1539. The little chapel became the parish church of the existing village; the hospital site was given to John Viset Lisle, afterwards Duke of Northumberland, who was beheaded in 1553. After that it passed through many hands.

In those far-off days a gallows stood in front of the hospital. Here in 1414 Sir John Oldcastle, a Lollard, was hanged in chains over a slow fire for having planned a rising in St. Giles's Fields. It was the custom for criminals on their way to execution to receive a bowl of ale at the hospital gates, and when the place of hanging was shifted to Tyburn "St. Giles's Bowl" was still served to the condemned prisoners as their "last refreshment": the rest of their unhappy journey belongs to the bells of Old Bailey. The Duchess of Dudley, a great benefactor to the church in the seventeenth century, paid the sexton an annual sum of money to toll the big bell when the criminals were passing. Lepers and criminals create rather unsavoury associations, and there was yet another bad type to be found here. Next to St. Giles's Pound (which stood in the High Street, and from which distances were measured)

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was the Cage, a place where occasional offenders were imprisoned. This disappeared about 1716.

We do not know much about the early churches on this site; the first to be illustrated had a queer round tower with a dome on top. In 1617 the tower was taken down and replaced by a steeple; and then the fabric of the whole church was found to be so decayed that it was in danger of collapsing. Rebuilding was begun in 1623, and by 1630 a new Gothic structure was completed. Again decay set in—through damp—but nothing could be done till after 1729 because there was no money. Finally Flitcroft rebuilt the church as it stands, finishing the work in 1734.

It is one of the last in the Wren tradition, and has a plain body and a lovely octagonal steeple modelled on that of St. Martin-in-the-Fields. The carving in relief over the portico represents the Resurrection: it was executed in 1687 at a cost of £185. The interior is spacious and pleasant, and is filled with a mellow light due to the cream-painted walls, touches of gold on the woodwork, and the yellow tints in the Transfiguration scene of the east window. The other windows are round-headed and filled with clear glass, and there are galleries on the north and south sides. The pulpit was once a three-decker, and so high that it commanded the galleries; but it has now been reduced to a normal height.

What is really remarkable about the church is the number of notabilities who are buried here. In the churchyard is the tomb of Richard Pendrell, who hid Charles II at his home, Boscobel, after the Battle of Worcester. The King did not forget his friend, but

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at the Restoration granted £200 to him "whose services in a time of the greatest trial of his fidelity are known," and also money to his brothers. Richard died in 1672.

George Chapman, the translator of Homer, who died in 1634, lies in the churchyard, but his monument by Inigo Jones has been removed into the church. Andrew Marvell, the poet, died in 1678 and was buried here; and in the church is a tablet to Luke Hansard—the original Hansard—who was printer of the House of Commons Journal from 1774 to 1813: he departed this life in 1828. The most imposing tomb is that of the church's benefactor, the Duchess of Dudley, whose recumbent effigy lies on the north side. An elaborate carving in the north porch commemorates John Flaxman, the famous potter, who lived from 1755 to 1826. This does not exhaust the list—there are more for the visitor to discover—but we will end with a person appropriate to the district. In 1786 Edward Dennis, the Tyburn hangman, was buried in the churchyard.

*Halfpence and farthings,  
Say the bells of St. Martin's*

MEDIÆVAL London knew no less than six churches dedicated to St. Martin—and all are worthy of notice. The genial Bishop of Tours, who lived in the fourth century, has always been a favourite saint, and one of the oldest churches in England is that dedicated to him at Canterbury. Today he is invoked unwittingly in what is apparently a slang expression, for “All my eye and Betty Martin” was originally *Ora pro nobis O beata Martini* (Pray for us, O blessed Martin).

He is primarily the soldiers' saint, and it was a military cloak that he shared with a beggar in the well-known story. But because his feast (Martinmas) occurs on November 11th during the vintage season when wines are tasted, he is also associated with the wine trade. The Vintners' Company had their own church of St. Martin-in-the-Vintry, or St. Martin Beremand (derived from “baerman,” a porter), with a history going back to 1212. This first church must have fallen into ruin, for Stow describes it as “newly builded about the year 1399 by the executors of Mathew Columbars, a stranger borne, a Burdeaux Marchant of Gascoyne and

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French wines." Just as the Hanseatic merchants were established at the Steelyard, so the merchant Vintners, both French and English, settled in the Vintry. Here was wealth: one of the Vintners entertained at a banquet Edward III and the Black Prince, with the kings of Scotland, France and Cyprus. Geoffrey Chaucer was born in the Vintry in 1310 and was the son of a Vintner.

Adjacent to the church stood the Vintry itself, a large building of timber and stone, with vaults wherein wine was stored. The church was burnt out in the Fire and not rebuilt, its parish being added to that of St. Michael Paternoster Royal in College Hill, the church where Sir Richard Whittington was buried, and next door to which stood his house. St. Martin's disused burial ground, formerly a shady spot where one might walk under trees, is now part of the general devastation of this Thames-side district.

Other churches dedicated to St. Martin had curious sub-designations. Near Bishopsgate was St. Martin Outwich, or Oteswich, also known in the Middle Ages as St. Martin's-with-the-Well-and-Two-Buckets. As one bucket went down empty the other came up filled; and this constant water supply must have been invaluable for dealing with fires in the neighbourhood. We are apt to forget how ever-present was the threat of fire in the congested narrow streets of the City with their dwellings of timber and thatch. The church was named after Sir John de Oteswich, who founded a chantry here in 1331. It escaped the Fire, but was burnt down in 1765. A year later another church arose in its place, oval in

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shape, with a low tiled roof and a small square tower; but that was demolished about 1876. Some of its monuments, including the tomb of Sir John and his wife, were removed to St. Helen's, Bishopsgate, and the two parishes were united.

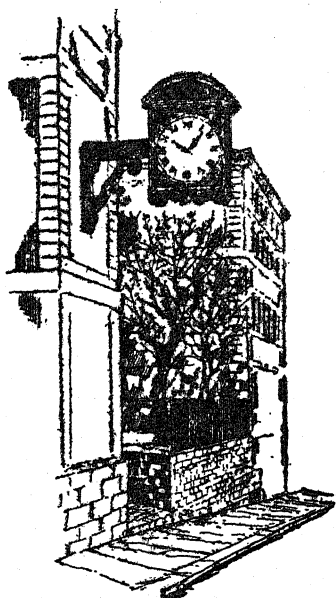
St. Martin Pomary, in Ironmongers Lane, off Cheapside, received its name in 1252 either because originally it stood in an apple orchard—one of many in that neighbourhood—or from a family called Pomeroy. It fell a victim to the Fire, and was not rebuilt. A leafy garden remains to mark the spot, but the tower and church façade therein belonged to St. Olave Jewry, which was pulled down in 1885.

“A smal thing” but ancient was the Church of St. Martin Orgar, or Ordgar. It derived its name from its founder, Orgar, a Danish deacon who granted the church to St. Paul's in the twelfth century. If we search for this church in the narrow alley of Martin's Lane, a turning south of King William Street, we shall see a big, black-dialled clock projecting from an ugly red-brick tower that has a two-storied building attached to it. Alongside, a plane tree in a dingy plot (the ancient churchyard) extends its protecting branches over the lane. The tower is all that remains to mark the church. The edifice was badly damaged in the Fire, but the tower and nave were repaired and given to the French Protestants. Later it became ruinous and had to be taken down. The parish was united to St. Clement's, Eastcheap, and the present tower was put up in 1851.

Projecting clocks were a conspicuous feature of some of the churches, and a few still exist to remind

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us of an age when citizens were largely dependent upon public clocks for knowing the time of day. They were often elaborate and much decorated; that at St. Magnus-the-Martyr was adorned with



*Projecting clock on the site of St. Martin Orgar*

sacred and mythological figures, cupids, eagles and cherubim, and the old clock at St. Mary-le-Bow was nearly as ornate. The clocks that remain are replacements of a considerably plainer type.

\* \* \*

A great and wealthy institution in ancient London was that of St. Martin-le-Grand, which stood on the site now occupied by the General Post Office. Founded in 1056 by two brothers, Ingelric and



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Edward, it was a collegiate establishment originally intended for secular canons, and it boasted a church, chapter-house, canons' residences and a school (one of the few in the City at this time). The charter granted by William the Conqueror gave the canons practically unlimited power, so their arrogance can be imagined. The College flourished until 1548, when it was surrendered to Edward VI, and the church was pulled down.

Among the privileges granted to St. Martin's was that of sanctuary; and as the College lay between Newgate with its prison-house in the gateway and the busy Chepe, this right was frequently exercised, and at times led to clashes with the civic authorities. Even after the College had disappeared and a tavern had been built on the site of the church, the practice continued, right up to the time of James II. Any man might take refuge here from his enemies, and no one, however high his rank, might interfere. That sounds reassuring; but one point usually overlooked is that sanctuary only meant safety—not food. These refugees were not fed by the church or institution that gave them shelter, but were dependent on the charity of their friends or casual benefactors. Consequently many poor wretches, though safe from pursuit, actually died of starvation; and in the sanctuary of St. Martin's one of the murderers of the princes in the Tower, Miles Forest, "rotted away piecemeal," according to Sir Thomas More.

In Elizabeth I's time the district round St. Martin-le-Grand was occupied chiefly by foreigners—French, Dutch and German—who worked as

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shoemakers and manufacturers of counterfeit plate, sham jewellery, embroideries and lace. These traders had a monopoly, and "St. Martin's jewellery," "St. Martin's lace" became contemptuous terms for anything cheap or tawdry, just as today "Brummagem goods" bear the stigma of shoddiness.



One would think that St. Martin's, Ludgate (originally "within Lud-gate"), marking almost the exact spot where the old gatehouse stood, might put up a reasonable claim to be an "Oranges and Lemons" church. But the authorities modestly disavow any such ambition. "St. Martin's only has one bell, and that's out of order," they say. However, nobody can make assertions about the distant past, and that of St. Martin's is very distant indeed. Part of its foundation rests on the Roman wall of the City, and it is alleged that Cadwallo, King of the Britons, after reigning for forty years, died in A.D. 677, and was buried here. Robert of Gloucester tells us of him:

A church of St. Martyn, livyng he let rere,  
In which yat men shold Goddys seruyse do,  
And sing for his Soule and Christene also.

That this monarch was feared after death as well as in life seems to be confirmed by Speed, the historian, who relates that "his image great and terrible, triumphantly riding on horseback, artificially cast in brass, was placed on the West Gate of the City to the fear and terror of the Saxons."

The second church on the site dated from 1437, and was repaired or rebuilt in 1523. In 1561 it was

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struck by lightning, then destroyed in the Great Fire. The only portion of this building that remains is the wall flanking the passage to the vestry. Sir Christopher Wren was responsible for the present agreeable building erected in 1684. The elegant spire, 168 feet high, is made of wood covered in lead, and with its unusual little balcony is a landmark. It is said that Wren purposely made it light in construction, tapering and black to contrast against the rounded dome and white Portland stone of his great cathedral so close at hand. What a far cry it is from the sturdy square mediæval church tower that was necessary as a look-out and place of defence in troubled times to this slender steeple that is purely decorative and breathes of peace.

A tablet on the façade of the church commemorates the site of the old Lud Gate, named after Lud, the god of water: not only was the Thames quite near, but the Fleet river flowed just outside the wall. This gate was pulled down and rebuilt in 1586, after which it lasted until 1760, when it was finally demolished. The statue of Queen Elizabeth I that stood over the gateway now looks out from a niche by the side of St. Dunstan-in-the-West.

The church is roughly the shape of a cube. Inside, a vestibule helps to deaden the noise of traffic, and the nave is divided into a Greek cross by four of Wren's favourite Corinthian columns mounted on tall octagonal pedestals. Over the vestibule is a gallery which holds the organ, built by Father Smith and later handed over to Renatus Harris, his rival in organ-building. The altar-piece is arched and pillared, the walls are panelled, and there are

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handsome carved screens and door-cases, the work of Grinling Gibbons's pupils. It is said of this church that "Sir Christopher Wren bestowed on the inside much of the ornament, the festoons and the carving which its situation did not mind him to bestow on the outside." During the war St. Martin's suffered no damage, and all the lovely woodwork was sent to a place in Somerset for safety.

Pictures of St. Mary Magdalene and St. Gregory remind us that these two parishes were absorbed by St. Martin's. St. Gregory's Parish must have been practically non-existent, for the little church stood close to the south-west corner of St. Paul's, within the precincts of the cathedral, and is yet another instance of the huddling together of the City churches. St. Mary Magdalene stood in Fish Street.

On the font in St. Martin's is a Greek palindrome that, translated, says, "Wash my sin, not my face only"; and near the altar stands a unique double chair dated 1690. A remarkable spot lies behind the church outside. There, in an open space, once the churchyard but now belonging to the Stationers' Company next door, stands a magnificent old plane. This tree marks the spot where heretical books were publicly burnt. Somehow, when reading of this ceremony one never imagined that the books had a definite place of execution. How suitable that they should meet their end in a one-time burial yard!

In times past rectors of St. Martin's were also chaplains of the Fleet Prison where debtors were confined. An underground passage ran between the

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two places; and although the prison was demolished in 1846 a keyhole in the panelling of the church, near the font, still indicates the route that the rector took when he went to minister to the prisoners.



Well outside the City, as its name indicates, is St. Martin-in-the-Fields. But this is one of the present-day churches that claims affinity with the rhyme, and it has a peal of twelve bells that are rung every Sunday by the Royal Society of Cumberland Youths, who have their headquarters here. Bells have been associated with the church for a very long time; three and a Sanctus bell were mentioned in 1525. In 1539 a new set were cast and hung, and more were added in 1584. When the present church was erected all the bells were again recast, and the No. 6 bell is inscribed, "Rudhall of Gloucester cast us all 1725." There are now thirteen bells, including a Sanctus bell which bears the brief inscription "A. R. 1725."

The earliest church on this spot was standing in the thirteenth century. It appears to have been a chapel used by the monks of Westminster Abbey when they visited or worked in this part of the convent garden (now Covent Garden, derived from the French *couvent*) that lay on the east side of the chapel: here, too, was their burial ground. At one time the chapel belonged to St. Margaret's, Westminster; but when that became a parish church in 1536, St. Martin's also attained parochial dignity. It was rebuilt in 1544 in a Gothic style with a square tower in front. This edifice was enlarged in 1607, and a

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steeple with six bells was added in 1699. Then in 1721 it was pulled down, and the work of building the present church was entrusted to James Gibbs, a pupil of Wren, whose bust can be seen near the door of the south aisle. The building took five years to complete, and the exterior has remained practically unaltered from that day.

St. Martin's is the finest example of Gibbs's work, and looking across Trafalgar Square to this classical building set at the top of its broad flight of steps, one cannot but admire the pillars and portico, the steeple, and the perfect proportions of the whole. Here, too, as at St. Leonard's, Shoreditch, we can observe the difference between Wren's steeples and those of his successors. All the Wren steeples rise directly from the ground, as true steeples should; those of Gibbs and Dance and Flitcroft only lift themselves from the roofs of their buildings, thereby losing much of their effect.

The royal coat-of-arms carved in stone on the pediment shows that St. Martin's is a royal parish; Buckingham Palace lies within its bounds. Incidentally, for the first and only time in history a sovereign became a churchwarden when George I held that office here. St. Martin's is also the parish church of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, and on state occasions the white ensign is flown on the flagpole above the portico.

Inside the church simplicity is the keynote—in spite of the ceiling. An unwritten law decrees that there shall be no monuments on the walls, and hence they are refreshingly bare and unadorned above their panelling: the only personal reminder of any

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sort is the bust of James Gibbs. The round-headed windows are filled with small panes of faintly tinted glass that is most restful for the eyes. The pulpit is simple, and so are the pale greyish pillars—as far as the capitals. And then pillars and ceiling burst into glorious fretted decorations of blue and gold, which, however, do not detract from the peaceful atmosphere of the interior. The creators of this exuberance were two Italian artists, Signori Artari and Bagutti, “the best Fretworkers that ever came to England.”

Gibbs only provided seating in the galleries; on the floor of the church people had to stand or kneel. High pews were introduced in 1799, and cut down to their present level in 1858. Special accommodation is provided for the royal parishioners; their roomy “boxes” are placed on either side of the chancel and sanctuary, and are furnished with old carved mahogany chairs cushioned in red velvet. Above, and adjoining the galleries, are what look like small apartments; these are for the use of the royal household. On the north side is the “Altar Organ,” which is played from the main console but gives out a quiet tone that is very effective in antiphonal music.

If the church breathes forth the spirit of today, the crypt, with its vaulting and massive stone piers, is redolent of the past. At one end of the white-washed chapel are set a whipping-post of 1751, which looks as though it has seen plenty of use, and a heavy elm chest of 1597 with hand-forged iron-work. The south side of the chapel is paved with gravestones from the churchyard; and tablets from the former church set forth the virtues of

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seventeenth-century parishioners. One epitaph of 1687, commemorating Margaret White, dryly remarks:

A Friendly Neighbour and a Virtuous Wife,  
Doubtless she's blessed with Everlasting Life.

Nell Gwynn was buried in the chancel of the old church in 1687, but there is no trace of her grave. Other celebrities who were laid to rest here included Roubillac, the sculptor (1762), and Thomas Chippendale, designer of furniture (1779).

It makes one realise what charnel houses the London churches must have been when we read that in 1859 coffins to the number of 2,266, with other human remains—equivalent to the population of a village—were removed from these vaults beneath the church to catacombs under the churchyard. Later still, in 1938, they were taken to Brookwood Cemetery and reinterred. These were a mere fraction of what were taken away from the London churches; St. Clement Danes yielded more than 4,000 remains, St. Helen's over 2,000, and so it would be throughout the City in proportion. Burials in churches and crypts were so common that we find Charles Dickens (in *The Uncommercial Traveller*) describing his visit to a City church thus:

All our little party wink, sneeze and cough. The snuff seems to be made of the decay of matting, wood, cloth, stone, iron and something else. Is this something else the decay of dead citizens in the vaults below? As sure as death it is.

Not only in the cold damp February day do we cough and sneeze dead citizens all through the service, but dead citizens have got into the very bellows of the organ and



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half-choked the same. We stamp our feet to warm them, and dead citizens arise in heavy clouds. Dead citizens stick upon the walls, lie pulverised on the sounding board over the clergyman's head, and when a gust of air comes, tumble down upon him.

That grim description is no longer true. The crypts were nearly all cleared before the end of the last century, and since Dickens's time an amazing change has taken place in the hygiene and care of the churches as well as in their spiritual condition.

St. Martin's stands in the very heart of the British Commonwealth, and is not only a physical landmark but a spiritual: the devotion of its clergy and people, the fame of its services are known throughout the world. It was brought even nearer to the hearts of men during the war when from 1939 to 1941 the crypt was used as an air-raid shelter, and some of the vaults were transformed into a canteen for the Forces. Thousands of people at home and overseas will always cherish the memory of St. Martin's for the shelter and comfort they received there. On the walls of the crypt are a portrait and a head in relief, unneeded reminders of the two priests ("Dick" Sheppard and "Pat" McCormick) who built up the life and tradition of St. Martin's, and sent its message "into all the world."

*Pancakes and fritters,  
Say the bells of St. Peter's*

THE oldest church in London! Then surely the bells of St. Peter-upon-Cornhill must have rung out in ancient times when one or two discordant clanging sounds sufficed for a church's message? They cannot have been remarkable in any way, for they seem to have been eclipsed in the Middle Ages by the "fair ring" at St. Michael's, a little farther along Cornhill, which were said to be "the best ring of six bells in England for harmony, sweetness of sound and tune."

There were other churches in London dedicated to the apostle who denied his Lord, and after being head of the Christian Church in Rome was martyred for his faith. But the great abbey at Westminster bearing his dedication is too far out to figure in our rhyme. Within the City St. Peter Parva (St. Peter the Less) at Paul's Wharf was destroyed in the Fire, and only its scrap of churchyard remains as a tiny garden with a few tombs in Upper Thames Street. But we can read here on an inscribed stone slab how "In this church when the use of the book of Common Prayer was forbidden under penalties by the usurper Cromwell its services were regularly

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used throughout the period of oppression by the Rev. Thomas Morson and others." The rest of the inscription is illegible, and one hopes it doesn't say that severe penalties were inflicted on these people for their courage.

As we walk away from the little plot time seems to slip backwards till we are caught in the sixteenth century or thereabouts. These same little steep cobbled alleys led down then to the river, to the stairs and water-gates and wharves where barges unloaded merchandise and boats put off their passengers. Their names were the same, too. Paul's Wharf was a landing place with a common stair; Trig Lane, with its stone steps down to the water, was Trig Lane; at Broken Wharf was a water-gate that had broken off and fallen into the river; Queenhithe was an important harbour . . . And at the bottom of the alleys, then as now, were glimpses of molten silver—the Thames gliding past endlessly.

Climbing upwards to the labyrinth of little streets east of St. Paul's went Old Fish Street Hill, Fye-foot Lane, Huggin Lane, Trinity Lane, Garlick Hill and the rest, just as they do today; only then they were sprinkled with a dozen churches and many large houses. With so much of this area laid waste we can note how the ground rises to the ridge of St. Paul's and Cheapside; and it is possible to see the towers of St. Mary Aldermary and St. Mary Somerset, St. Nicholas Cole Abbey and the springing spire of St. Mary-le-Bow, as well as the vast bulk of the cathedral and the dark cupola and lantern of St. Benet Hude. On a quiet Sunday afternoon when the City is largely given over to the pigeons and

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sparrows we can wander here and people the Thames-side alleys with ghosts of our own imagining.

Another church that no longer exists was St. Peter-le-Poer in Bread Street. Its secondary designation either referred to the poverty of the apostle when he became a follower of Christ, or else was meant to serve as a contrast with the church's wealthy neighbour upon Cornhill. Long ago a church stood here, for it was mentioned by Ralph de Diceta in his survey of 1181. A later building of 1540, which was enlarged in 1615, escaped the Fire, but it was so badly neglected that in 1788 it was demolished to make way for a new church designed by Jesse Gibson. This was in the form of a circle, with a gallery all round except for the altar recess, and a domed ceiling with a large lantern to admit light. The church was pulled down in 1892, and the parish united to that of St. Michael, Cornhill.

In early times there were two great market-places in the City. Eastcheap served the burgesses until it was largely built over in the twelfth century; Westcheap, not far from the western entrance to the City at Newgate, served the households of the king and the monastery of St. Paul's. This market remained open till a later date than Eastcheap. St. Peter, Westcheap, stood at the end of Wood Street, close to the gold-beaters' quarter in Gutter Lane (a corruption of "Gutturun," an early owner of the property). Fine silver coins that the gold-beaters made were known as "silver of Gutturun's Lane." St. Peter's is now represented by a small graveyard and a large tree tucked away in Wood Street: the parish has gone to St. Vedast, Foster Lane.

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There remains St. Peter-ad-Vincula, that church of grim memories at the Tower, where so many headless bodies were buried while their noble or traitorous heads were exposed on London Bridge and elsewhere. The Tower is a parish in itself, and St. Peter's is its own church, not to be confused with the chapel of St. John in the White Tower. A chapel of St. Peter was mentioned in 1210. This was rebuilt in the reign of Edward III, and almost entirely reconstructed early in the sixteenth century. In modern times it has undergone much restoration, but outwardly, save for the removal of a south porch, it looks much as it did when it was the background of so much unhappiness. A plain building, there is nothing outstanding about it—except its terrible haunting memories. Inside, slender clustered columns support wide shallow-vaulted arches. The beamed roof is rather flat, and behind and above the altar is a simple Perpendicular window. To the earlier church came Henry III and his Queen; and records of this building include instructions from the King to those responsible at the Tower for plastering and painting statues of saints. Once upon a time a hermit, or anchorite, lived in a cell at the back of the church, and was paid one penny daily by the King—a pretty good income for those days, considering that food was his only expense.

Of the many whose lives ended tragically on Tower Hill or on the Green, and whose bodies are buried in the church, we can recall a few. There were Sir Thomas More and his friend, Fisher, Bishop of Rochester; Anne Boleyn, who lies under the altar, and one of her successors, Katherine

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Howard, whose shrieking ghost haunts Hampton Court Palace; that aged gentlewoman, Margaret, Countess of Salisbury; Seymour, Lord High Admiral, and his brother, the Protector Somerset; the gentle Lady Jane Grey and her young husband, Lord Guildford Dudley; Thomas Cromwell, Henry VIII's busy minister; James, Duke of Monmouth . . . a sad procession, these and many others trail across the pages of history.

And so, having made the round of St. Peter's other churches, we come back to where we started. St. Peter's-upon-Cornhill stands in the highest part of the City—a fact difficult to realise unless one goes down to Upper Thames Street and, across the waste area, observes the gentle rising slope of the ground from St. Paul's up to *Corn-hill*. According to tradition, the first church was built in A.D. 179, and a tablet in the vestibule sets forth the story of its foundation by Lucius, the first Christian king of Britain. It is impossible to distinguish legend from fact in such far-off days, and there is no record of Lucius until some centuries after his reign. The Venerable Bede says that the King sent messengers to Rome in A.D. 170, asking that teachers might come and tell him and his people more about Christ. This was four hundred years before St. Augustine arrived in Britain. And, according to the account in the vestibule, Lucius also founded an archbishop's province in London and made St. Peter's the chief church—which state of affairs lasted until the coming of St. Augustine.

Whether, later on, St. Peter's was actually of cathedral status or not, it was certainly important.

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In 1226 it had three priests (the requisite number for a cathedral) and no less than seven altars; and when it was decreed that all cathedrals must have a school attached to them, and Parliament ordered (in 1447) four parochial schools to be maintained in London, St. Peter-upon-Cornhill was one of them, the others being at St. Thomas Acon, All Hallows, Lombard Street and St. Andrew's, Holborn.

At one time there was great disputing as to which was the oldest church in London; St. Peter's, St. Magnus-the-Martyr and St. Nicholas Cole Abbey all claimed precedence. The squabbling went on for years, and at last reached a climax on one Corpus Christi festival. In the important procession that walked from St. Peter's to St. Paul's, and included clergy in their vestments, mayor and aldermen in rich robes, guilds and fraternities resplendent with crosses and banners, all three parishes strove for the place of honour at the tail of the procession. It was most unseemly. After this an inquiry was set up, the story of King Lucius was brought forward to strengthen St. Peter's claim, and this proof of antiquity swung the decision in the church's favour. Thereafter St. Peter's took the place of honour.

The ancient church had a very fine library. Here again legend has been busy, attributing its building to Elvanus, the second archbishop, but it was probably erected at a later date. Sir John Crosby left a sum of money for its repair. The books and manuscripts formed a splendid collection; they were examined and commended by John Leyland, the historian. But when the grammar school was

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established the books were removed, and the library building given over to the school.

We know little of the church before the Fire. The parish books have entries respecting repairs during the early part of the seventeenth century; and in Hollar's engraved *View of London* (1647) a square, two-storied tower with battlements is depicted, and within the battlements a pointed kind of dome raised on clustered columns and topped by a vane. In St. Peter's Alley, at the south-west corner of the church, is seen a round embattled tower; and the church extended a good 10 feet into what is now Gracechurch Street. The Fire swept through the church and consumed everything but the walls and tower. Later these were taken down; and although the foundations may have been used for the present building, which was erected fourteen years after the disaster, the only portion of the old church definitely known to be remaining is the base of the red-brick tower.

While the church was being built Wren put up a small temporary structure for the parishioners to worship in, and the registers show that they were not ungrateful for this favour: "the Churchwardens do present Dr. Wren with five guineas as a gratuity for his paines in the furtherance of a tabernacle for this parish." Because 10 feet of length were sacrificed for the widening of Gracechurch Street the east end of the church appears as an ugly flat wall in that street. But if we raise our eyes we see cherubs above the windows set in the wall.

As we approach Cornhill from Bishopsgate we notice the 140-feet-high tapering leaden spire and



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its weather-vane in the shape of a huge key rising apparently from the middle of a block of buildings. We wonder where the church can be, and how on earth we can get to it: never was a building more remorselessly squeezed by its neighbours. Perhaps that congestion was its salvation during the war, for it was one of the few churches that escaped damage. However, steps and a doorway in Cornhill lead to the roomy vestibule, and so into the church. The little paved graveyard is hidden away on the south side, in St. Peter's Alley, and is a breathing space among tall blocks of offices. To people resting on the seats the clicking of typewriters comes faintly like the twittering of birds. Stone urns containing geraniums are set here and there, and the yard is shaded by very tall plane trees.

Inside, St. Peter's is restful but not particularly light, in spite of plain round-headed windows. This may be because the five windows at the east end are filled with rather dark stained glass designed by Gibbs. It is easy to picture high pews filled by a decorous congregation here in the eighteenth century, and one wonders if they were ever guilty of the strange practice of humming during the sermon. Could Dr. Johnson have written of the preachers and congregation at St. Peter's as he did of those in another London church?

There prevailed in those days an indecent custom: when the preacher touched any favourite topic, in a manner that delighted his audience, their approbation was expressed by a loud hum, continued in proportion to their zeal and pleasure. When Burnet preached, part of his congregation hummed so loudly and so long that he sat down to enjoy it, and rubbed his face with his handkerchief. When Sprat

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preached, he likewise was honoured with a like animating hum, but he stretched out his hand to the congregation and cried, "Peace, peace, I pray you, peace."

Separating the body of the church from the chancel is a graceful oak screen surmounted in the centre by the lion and unicorn. This was supposedly designed by Sir Christopher Wren's only daughter, that same Jane who was her father's constant companion for many years. She died twenty years before him, at the age of twenty-six, and her monument is close to his in the crypt of St. Paul's.

The reredos, softly illumined, shines out in gold and red. Its design is unusual, and consists of "the ancient emblem of the Lamb that was slain, and blazing forth from it the sun or morning star burning in its rays." The carved cover of the font was saved from the Fire, and contains a dove that is movable but not removable. Handsome bread-shelves are to be seen at the west end.

The organ in its gallery at the west end was originally built by Father Smith at a cost of £210, though it has since been renovated. Under the Puritan régime organs were banished from the churches, for music was considered ungodly; but at the Restoration it took its rightful place in worship once more. By then, however, the craft of organ-building had declined in England—there had been no demand for it during the Commonwealth—and so organ-builders from the Continent were invited to come and provide the churches with new instruments.

Chief among these craftsmen were Father Smith and Renatus Harris: they were keen rivals, and

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there was often unpleasantness between them. This was hardly surprising considering their nationalities and temperaments and the very close competition in which they worked. Father Smith (originally Bernhard Schmidt) came to England from Germany, accompanied by his nephews who travelled about and did repairing jobs on instruments all over the country. He was appointed organ-builder to Charles II in 1671, and lived at Whitehall in apartments provided for him. His instruments were renowned for their beauty and sweetness of tone, but mechanically his work was defective and often badly finished off.

Renatus Harris seems to have been Smith's opposite in every way. He hailed from France, and was the grandson of Thomas Harris, who had built an organ for Magdalen College, Oxford. The instruments Renatus built were superior in workmanship to Father Smith's, but their tone was less powerful and sometimes poorer in quality. Between them the two craftsmen built practically all the organs in the City churches. Mendelssohn is said to have played upon the organ at St. Peter's and pronounced it a very fine instrument. The original keyboard is preserved, with Mendelssohn's autograph.

The church has no interesting memorials save one. High on the south wall of the chancel is a monument adorned with seven cherubs, that commemorates a terrible domestic tragedy. On the night of January 18th, 1782, Mr. James Woodmason, of Leadenhall Street, went with his wife to a ball at St. James's Palace given in honour of the Queen's birthday. In

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the course of the evening he was called aside and told that his house had been burnt down and all his seven children (the eldest under six) had perished in the fire. Mr. Isaac Heard, Clarenceux King of Arms, was with the distraught parents when the news was brought, and he caused this monument to be set up. After giving the names and ages of the children, the inscription continues:

The Whole Offspring of James and Mary Woodmason  
in the same awful moment of the 18 Jan 1782 Translated  
by sudden and irresistible Flame In the late Mansion of  
their sorrowing Parents from the sleep of Innocence to  
Eternal Bliss Their remains collected from the Ruins Are  
here combined. A sympathizing Friend of the bereaved  
Parents, their Companion through the night of the 18 of  
Jan in a scene of Distress beyond the Powers of Language  
perhaps of Imagination Devotes this spontaneous Tribute  
of the Feelings of his Mind to the Memory of Innocence.

In the vestry is a long wooden table which at one time was placed in the nave by the Puritans, and used for Communion. But the church's most precious treasure is a copy of Jerome's Vulgate, a fourth-century translation of the Old and New Testaments in Latin. This carries us back to the early days of the church, for it was transcribed on fine white vellum by a scribe of St. Peter's who probably worked in the famous library, and is beautifully illuminated with painted borders and miniature pictures.

*Two sticks and an apple,  
Say the bells of Whitechapel*

WE begin with the horrid story of a crime. It was committed in 1428, but reads as though it might have occurred yesterday: human nature does not change.

In the parish of Whitechapel there lived a devout widow who of her charity brought up a young boy (French or English, his nationality doesn't really matter) till he reached years of discretion. In return for this kindness the youth got up one night, murdered the old lady in her bed, and made off with her jewellery and everything else he could lay his hands on. The crime was discovered, a hue and cry raised, and the villain was chased till, thoroughly scared, he took refuge in St. George's Church, Southwark, and claimed sanctuary. He must have been too late in applying, for the constables seized him and brought him back into London, meaning to take him farther eastward than Whitechapel, so that no scandal should be attached to the parish. But as soon as the party reached his old home the angry housewives ran out of their houses, picked up lumps of filth from the street, and pelted the youth so hard with these

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that, in spite of the resistance put up by the constables, he finally died.

As a result of this second killing it was said that the parish of Whitechapel purchased the name of St. Mary Matfellow for their church, which formerly had been dedicated to the name of God and the Blessed Virgin. The whys and wherefores of the matter are not clearly explained, but possibly it was a question of association: the parish under its old dedication having become notorious, the people would naturally wish to rename it. Most historians declare that this sequel to the story is not true, and that St. Mary Matfellow received its name long before the incidents took place. At any rate, the church was mentioned in records as early as 1280. It was a chapel-of-ease to the parish of Stepney, and this little building, which was either whitewashed or made of white stone, was something of a landmark, and gave its name, "white chappel," to the surrounding district.

In early days this region consisted of common ground, pasture land, woods, farms and orchards. It stood a little higher than the low marshy ground east of the City that was apt to be overflowed at high tide. Later, the main road from Aldgate to Stepney ran through Whitechapel, and Stow says: "both sides of the streets be pestered with Cottages and Allies, euen vp to White chappel church: and almost halfe a mile beyond it, into the common field: all of which ought to lye open & free to all men." This thoroughfare was in some places hardly enough of a road for coaches and droves of cattle to pass each other. It was not a good approach to the City.

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All this region has been interesting through the ages. Just north of Whitechapel lies Spitalfields. According to Stow it was earlier known as Lolesworth, and in his day Roman funerary urns and Saxon coffins were unearthed, showing that it must have been used as a cemetery. Its present name was derived from the Priory of St. Mary Spittle (i.e. hospital) which was founded here in the "fields" by Walter Brun and his wife, Rosa, in 1197. When the priory was surrendered to Henry VIII there were 180 beds in the hospital. The famous "Spital sermons" were preached from a pulpit cross in the churchyard until 1642. In that year the Edict of Nantes was revoked, with the result that thousands of French Huguenots came to England seeking asylum. A large number settled in Spitalfields and introduced silk-weaving there. Because they were skilful, hardworking and frugal they thrived, and brought prosperity to the city of their adoption. Only the introduction of cheap silk goods from the Continent in the nineteenth century caused a decline in the Spitalfields industry.

Mile End in early times consisted of a manor and hamlet, and was probably so called because it stood exactly a mile from Aldgate. Whitechapel has sometimes been called the ghetto of London, for here during a long period Jews have congregated to carry on tailoring and other trades, and to lead their lives in their own way. Their gradual influx has been likened to the slow rising of a flood.

The latest church of St. Mary was the fourth on the site in Whitechapel Road. The first was the mediæval chapel already mentioned; the

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next was a church of Restoration days erected in 1675. Its successor, dating from 1875, was burnt out and had to be rebuilt in 1882. It stood thus until the war, an undistinguished edifice of dingy red brick with a spire and an outside pulpit for open-air preaching. Then it fell a victim to the Blitz and was completely gutted. It has now been razed to the ground, and will not be rebuilt; the site is desolate—and that is the end of the story of the little “white chappel.”

It never carried on its history dramatically after that outburst in the fifteenth century. Nothing of great note happened in the parish; but there is a strange entry in the church register. It records the burial on June 21st, 1649, of Richard Brandon, ragman, and against the entry is this memorandum in handwriting of the period: “This R. Brandon is supposed to have cut off the head of Charles I.” Whether this be true nobody can say for certain; naturally, everything to do with the execution was carried out with the utmost secrecy, and the headsman would have been masked. But legends accumulate wherever there is the smallest peg to hang them on, and so the story goes that Brandon received £30 for the job, paid within the hour all in half-crowns, and that he gave the money to his wife, saying that it was the dearest he had ever earned, and that it would cost him his life. Furthermore, he is supposed to have acknowledged that he took from the King’s pocket an orange stuck with cloves (a pomander of that time) and a handkerchief which he sold for 10s. He and his family led a wretched life until he died five months after his King; and when he lay in his



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coffin some of the parishioners clamoured to have him hanged, and others wanted his body to be thrown on a dunghill. Eventually he was buried in the churchyard with a sprig of rosemary (for remembrance of his foul deed) on his coffin.

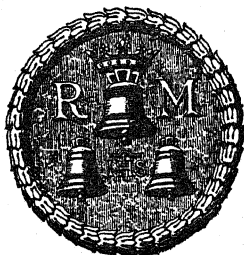
So much for romantic legend. What was of great interest concerning the church was its very odd name. There has been even more controversy over this than over the dedication of St. Margaret Pattens. Among ingenious and far-fetched derivations it has been suggested that the name was taken from a Hebrew expression meaning "She hath brought forth a son"; in which case the church might have been built by someone who had been on a pilgrimage or crusade to the Holy Land, and thus had learned the Hebrew word. Or the church may have owed its designation to some benefactor, as was often the case, for "Matfelon" and "Materfelonne" occurred as surnames in the fourteenth century, and one John de Knopweed, a mercer, died in 1341. The most obvious derivation seems to work out as follows. *Matfellow* is an old French word for the wild flower, knapweed; knapweed bears a resemblance to a thistle; a thistle is very much like a teasel; and a teasel forms part of the coat-of-arms of the Worshipful Company of Fullers, who once had a trade colony in Whitechapel. What more natural than that St. Mary's should be their church, and that their emblem should be incorporated in its dedication?

There were no special features in the church. We do know that at one time it possessed six bells, for "in 1737 two members of the Ancient Society of College Youths took part in 7 Surprise peals on the

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bells at St. Mary Matfelon, Whitechapel." Later on the number was increased to eight, but they were never particularly good. The tower used to sway considerably when the bells were sounding, and this made things very difficult for the ringers. These bells were destroyed by enemy action.

Whitechapel has been the home of bell-founding since 1567, and the famous foundry close to St. Mary's is now probably the oldest established in the country. At first it was in the hands of an unknown man, and then from 1575 to 1604 it was owned by Robert Mot. He was a very successful founder, and his bells were hung in many of the City churches. Up to the outbreak of the last war eighty of his bells still existed, although many were destroyed in the Fire. The earliest known to bear his name is at Danby, in Essex. St. Andrew's-under-Shaft possessed four (three dated 1597 and one 1600); there was another at St. Stephen's, Walbrook; and two of the finest, dated respectively 1583 and 1598, are at Westminster Abbey. They are inscribed with the name of the dean at that time—Gabriel Goodman. Mot's foundry stamp is circular, and consists of a wreath enclosing three bells, a crown, and the initials "R. M."



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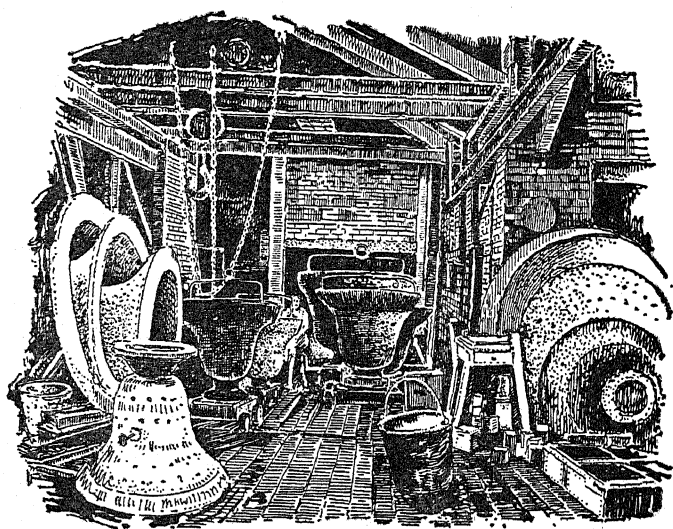
Work has gone on at the foundry continuously all through the centuries—the names of the successive founders are all known—and, as may be imagined, the present owners have a magnificent collection of ancient bells, inscriptions, decorations, founders' marks, and so on. It was they who cast Big Ben, and one enters the offices of the firm under what seems to be a queer, flat, bell-shaped arch, but is actually a wooden side-elevation, or "crook," the exact size of that redoubtable bell.

In the foundry we see built up the "core," or inner mould, which is a mass of clay reproducing the inside shape of the bell, and the "cope," or outside mould. On the cope any inscriptions or ornaments are fixed backwards, and sunken with modelling wax, so as to come out in the right order and in relief. These moulds have to be baked and dried, and then the molten metal is run into the extremely narrow space between them. After the metal has cooled, the moulds are removed, leaving the perfect new bell. What a dramatic moment it must be when the graceful metal shape is first revealed, and one realises that a new voice is to be given to the world! We used to hear a good deal about silver being cast into the molten mass to improve the sound of bells, but in reality silver would impair the tone: bell-metal is an alloy of copper and tin, with about three parts of the former to one part of the latter. Tuning is carried out by steam power which delicately shaves the rim, or sound-bow, till the desired pitch is obtained.

The shape of bells has not changed much since the fourteenth century: before that they were longer

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and narrower, and the Whitechapel foundry possesses specimens of this kind. A bell, when hung, is firmly fixed to a wooden wheel so that it does not swing aimlessly with unforeseen rebounds; when it is rung it swings through a complete circle with great precision. Bells will last for hundreds of years. When next their tumultuous music breaks upon our ears let us remember those craftsmen of old whose work, performed patiently and diligently in their day, is giving us such pleasure in our time.



*Interior : Whitechapel Bell Foundry*

*Pokers and tongs,  
Say the bells of St. John's*

FROM the noisy Clerkenwell Road, on the south side and just west of Charterhouse, runs a little lane that passes under a very solid-looking stone archway with rooms and windows above. This gatehouse is one of the few remaining relics of the great and famous Priory of St. John the Baptist, Clerkenwell, which was founded about 1100 by Jordan Briset, Baron. He also founded a Benedictine nunnery close by, and his name survives in the small thoroughfare of Briset Street, behind the archway of St. John's.

A tablet under the arch of the gatehouse (which is the fourth on the site) states:

This building was the main entrance to the Grand Priory of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem. The original gatehouse was erected about the year 1148, and was burnt down by Wat Tyler in 1381. It was restored by Prior John Redington and was finally rebuilt in its present form by Prior Thomas Docwra in 1504. The Grand Priory buildings were appropriated by the Crown in 1559. The Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem resumed possession of this gatehouse in 1873.

There, in short, we have the story of the Grand Priory, which is now the headquarters of the Order

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of St. John, with its branches all over the world, its Grand Masters, Knights, Commanders and other ranks, its affiliation with the Red Cross, its great and humane work for the relief of suffering. It would need a book to tell the story of the Order, but visitors to the gatehouse on Saturday afternoons can see the beautiful chapter-hall with its hanging banners (some of them threadbare) and portraits of past Grand Masters round the walls. Armorial bearings are set in the clear glass of the tall windows, and coats-of-arms painted on the wall panelling. Visitors are also shown over the museum, which is a treasure-house of valuable coins—the Knights had their own coinage of sequins and ducats for five centuries—insignia worn here and in other countries, illuminated manuscripts, plate, chain mail, and much else that is rare and precious.

The gatehouse tablet does not go into details: far more happened than is baldly stated on the stone, and we had better get our bearings before we go on with the story. Let us cross Clerkenwell Road and stand before the gutted church of St. John, while behind us in the paved open space drays are drawn up, and horses stamp and snort and toss their nose-bags. As we look up at this roofless ruined church we can still see the original stone tracery in the Perpendicular windows that Prior Docwra caused to be placed in the choir, and we note how inappropriate seems the plain red-brick wall that forms the western end of the building. Around us where we stand, a great circle, marked roughly by paving stones of a different kind, runs over the roadway on to the pavement and across the yard. This is the

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outline of the circular nave of the original church of the priory; the ruined building before us is only the former choir; and an inscription on the wall tells us proudly that the church was dedicated in 1185 by Heraclitus, Patriarch of Jerusalem.

At the western corner stood the bell-tower (its position now marked in the pavement outside a house in St. John's Square). Stow described the tower as "a most curious piece of workmanship, gilt and inameled to the great beautifying of the Cittie, and passing all others that I have seen." After the priory was dissolved the frame of the bells and the stone porch were taken to All Hallows, Lombard Street (originally of Gracechurch Street). The bells should have gone too, but before they could be removed the man who was doing the job died, and his son refused to finish the work begun by his father. The tale ends there, and we do not know what became of St. John's bells; we are only told that All Hallows' "fair steeple" was left with "but one bell, as friars were wont to use."

But we are running ahead of the story of the priory. It was a wealthy establishment, and was further enriched in 1324 by the revenues of the dissolved Knights Templars. Its buildings covered ten acres, and entertaining was done on a large scale. In those days hospitality was a religious duty, and kings and queens do not seem to have been backward in availing themselves of it at the priory. King John spent a month there in 1212; Prince Edward and Queen Eleanor stayed there at various times, as did Henry V also, and the Emperor Constantine when he came to England. Important persons

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naturally brought their retinues with them, and the priors ruefully confessed that these visits caused them much expenditure.

Probably the most dramatic event in St. John's early history was the burning of the church and part of the priory by Wat Tyler's rebels in 1381, when the prior of that time was beheaded in the great courtyard (now St. John's Square). The circular nave was consumed by the fire, and soon after was replaced by a nave of rectangular shape. The foundations of its north wall were discovered in St. John's Square in 1911, and measurements showed that it was 90 feet in length.

The most remarkable and gifted man who was ever in charge of St. John's was Sir Thomas Docwra, prior from 1501 to 1507, whose name is given on the tablet. Henry VIII valued his opinions and advice, and made use of him on embassies and commissions. Docwra built the bell-tower as well as the gatehouse, and added a chapel on the south side of the choir besides putting in the pointed windows. It is a good thing he died before the Dissolution, for what happened then to his beloved priory would have broken his heart, as it did that of Sir William Weston, his successor.

At that unhappy time Henry VIII "tooke into his own handes all the landes that belonged to that house and that Order, wheresoever in England and Ireland, for the augmentation of his crowne"—not a surprising action, for the annual revenues of the priory amounted to no less than £3,386. Prior Weston did not defy the King's action; he accepted a pension of £1,000 a year, but did not enjoy it



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long. On May 7th, 1540, "being Ascension Day and the same day as the dissolution of his house, he was dissolved by death, which strooke him to the heart at the first time when he heard of the Dissolution of his Order." He was buried in the church, and the effigy from his tomb is now in the crypt. The buildings of the priory were not pulled down nor damaged, but were used as "a storehouse for the king's toyles and tents, for hunting and for wars, etc." But in Edward VI's reign the body of the church and the aisles, together with the bell-tower, were mined and blown up with gunpowder. The stones from the destroyed part of the church were taken to help build Somerset House, the Lord Protector's residence in the Strand—and we know the unfinished story of the bells.

It may be asked, what became of the Knights while all this was happening? Where were they? A good many of them fled to Malta, and of those who remained here some were executed. When Mary came to the throne she invited the Knights to return, and they came back to St. John's. But what a sight awaited them! A ruined nave, roofless and exposed to all weathers, and the tower completely destroyed. However, the choir was usable, so they repaired it and put up the red-brick wall at the west end; and they revived the Order with all its ancient privileges. But they were not to remain in peace for long. Elizabeth I dissolved the Order and seized the property of the Knights, and once more they were compelled to flee to Malta. This time the priory was used as an office for the Queen's Master of the Revels.

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His function was to control and license (at the rate of 7s. for each script submitted) all the plays in London, and receive theatre licences annually; also to choose plays, masques and interludes for performance before the Queen. Nearly all Shakespeare's plays were licensed at St. John's, and he himself may have been summoned thither to discuss any doubtful allusions that might give offence to important personages. Edmund Tilney, who was appointed Master of the Revels in 1579 and still held the post in 1603, had to be on his guard against three pitfalls. On one hand was the Court, clamouring for dramatic entertainment, on the other the City, treating plays as "perilous nonsense," and between them the players, who were determined to have their own way in dramatic matters.

Tilney had a suite of rooms for his own use in the priory: a "great chamber" for rehearsals of plays, storage rooms, a kitchen, a stable for his horses, and a garden. He chose the Queen's plays by seeing them acted at St. John's, and for these auditions the actors brought their own costumes, properties and musicians, and Tilney bore the cost of transport to Clerkenwell. Rehearsals were held at night so as not to interfere with the working day of the actors, but actual performances took place in the afternoon about three o'clock. The hall needed plenty of light, and the bills at St. John's for one year during Tilney's term of office included fifteen dozen candles and two dozen torches that were set round the hall. There was also the problem of heating this "great chamber" in winter, and for this 4,000 sticks of firewood and two loads of coal were ordered, as well

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as rushes to keep the floor warm and clean. A porter and three other servants were paid a daily wage of 12d. for their attendance and service during rehearsals. It is quite possible that Shakespeare acted in the great hall, for he belonged to the Lord Chamberlain's (Lord Hunsdon's) Company in 1594, and then to the King's (James I's) Men in 1603.

After passing through various hands, the church of the priory was used as a Presbyterian meeting-house during the early eighteenth century; and in 1723 it was reconstructed as the parish church of St. John. The Order of St. John was revived under a fresh constitution in 1831, and, the freehold of the old gateway being obtained, it was redecorated and made their headquarters. St. John Ambulance Association is an offshoot of the Order, and was established in 1877. The parish of St. John was united with that of St. James, Clerkenwell, in 1931, and the priory church was then assigned for the sole use of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem. Every year thereafter, until the outbreak of war, on June 24th the Knights walked in procession from the gatehouse to the church for the Commemoration Service of the Order. Pacing solemnly two by two, in their long black mantles bearing the six-pointed white star on the shoulder—a garb that has survived the centuries—and wearing the insignia of the Order, we can imagine the pride and deep thankfulness that must have filled their hearts when they thought of the past. After nearly eight hundred years of storm and stress they were still worshipping in part of their own original church.

The church was badly damaged by enemy action

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during the war, but it will be restored as soon as possible. Meanwhile the services of the Order are being held in the crypt. A portion of this remains under the chancel of the original church, and very beautiful and impressive it is with its long nave, Norman and Transitional vaulting, and walls 14 feet thick. Here are collected fragments of Prior Docwra's tomb, and here lies the stone effigy of Prior Weston. There is also a fine sixteenth-century effigy of a Spanish Knight, and a scrap of pavement from the grotto of the Nativity at Bethlehem. The walls of a side chapel are partly covered with tablets in memory of past members of the Order.

The gatehouse has suffered many changes since the days of the first Elizabeth. In the seventeenth century there was an inner wooden gate that divided it into two passages, one for pedestrians, one for vehicles. A hundred years later *The Gentleman's Magazine* was published in the room over the archway, which was Cave's printing office; and here young Samuel Johnson used to write, and used to eat his dinner behind a screen because he was too poor and shabby to show himself. This room was also the scene of David Garrick's début in London, for he acted here before the publisher's workmen. Part of the gateway later became the Jerusalem Tavern.

Clerkenwell got its name from the clerks' well (in the neighbourhood of Farringdon Road), where in the fourteenth century the parish clerks used to assemble every year and act a play whose subject was taken from the Bible. These entertainments resembled the Japanese Noh plays in that they took

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several days to perform. They drew large audiences of "nobles and gentles," and in them we can see the beginning of the long dramatic tradition associated with this part of London.

\* \* \*

There were other old churches dedicated to the Baptist or the Evangelist which might have figured in "Oranges and Lemons." St. John Zachary, in Gresham Street, will be considered presently. St. John (the Baptist)-upon-Walbrook, which stood in Cloak Lane, was first mentioned in 1181. It was not rebuilt after the Fire; its parish went to St. Antholin, Watling Street. St. John the Evangelist, in Friday Street, was also burnt in the Fire and not rebuilt; the parish was joined to All Hallows, Bread Street, and when that in turn was demolished both were united to St. Mary-le-Bow. The chapel of St. John-within-the-Tower is a plain but perfect example of Norman architecture, and was the Chapel Royal of William the Conqueror and William Rufus.

The little Perpendicular chapel of St. Mary in the Savoy was originally dedicated "to the honour of our Saviour, the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. John Baptist." It is all that remains of a palace by the riverside which was built in 1245 by Peter, Earl of Savoy, uncle to Eleanor of Provence, Henry III's wife, and enlarged by successive Dukes of Lancaster, including John of Gaunt. This palace was burnt down by Wat Tyler in 1381; but before that time John of Gaunt had been the patron of Chaucer and Wyclif, and this spot was associated with the birth of English poetry and the first faint stirrings of the

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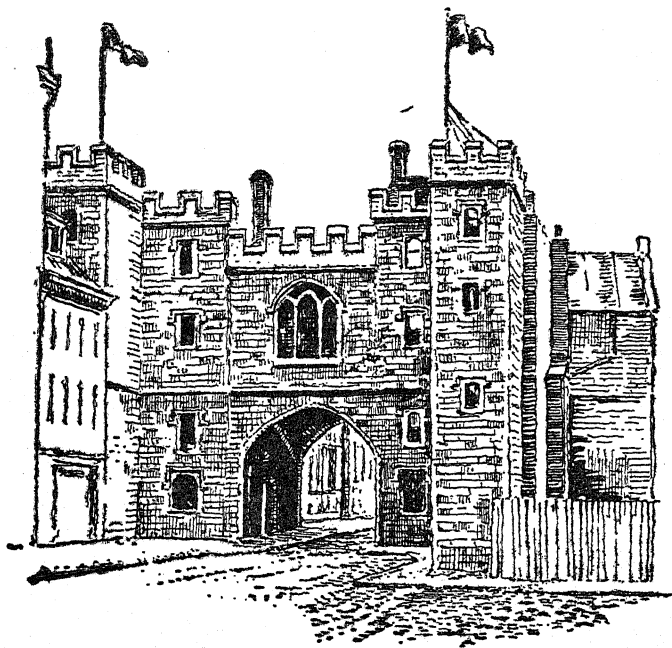
Reformation. After its destruction the Savoy palace was not rebuilt until 1505, when Henry VII endowed it as a hospital for one hundred poor people, and dedicated it to St. John the Baptist. It was suppressed in 1553, and the furnishings were given by Edward VI to St. Thomas's Hospital and Bridewell. Later, Mary re-endowed it, and Elizabeth I continued its upkeep: not until 1702 was it closed. The chapel dates from the rebuilding in 1505, and today it has a curiously isolated appearance as it stands in its little garden (the old burial yard) in a turning off the Strand.

When the old church of St. Mary-le-Strand was destroyed by the Protector Somerset, the parishioners attached themselves to the chapel of the Savoy, and took their dedication with them; St. John Baptist gave way to St. Mary. In 1773 the building was made a royal chapel by George III; George IV largely restored it; and after it had been damaged by fire in 1842, Queen Victoria restored it at her own expense, and caused the beautiful ceiling of painted, carved and emblazoned work to be renovated. In 1864 the chapel was again destroyed by fire, this time more completely, for only the walls were left standing. Again the Queen defrayed the cost of restoration—in memory of the Prince Consort. The elaborate ceiling was reproduced much as it had been before, but different in detail; walls and windows followed the original designs; and a sacristy, porch and entrance were subsequently added. The chapel is now the home of the Royal Victorian Order, and the stalls of the members are here. It is a parochial benefice in the gift of the sovereign, in right of her

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Duchy of Lancaster, and she pays every current expense pertaining to the chapel, its officers and services.

For many years a curious custom was observed here on the Sunday after Christmas Day: near the door was placed a chair covered with a cloth, and on the cloth was set an orange on a plate. Why this was done, and what significance it held, nobody has ever been able to find out—but unknown though it is, it does seem to form a slight and trivial link with the rest of “Oranges and Lemons.”



*St. John's Gatehouse, Clerkenwell*

*Kettles and pans,  
Say the bells of St. Ann's*

THIS little church, that shares its dedication with St. Agnes and St. John Zachary, might easily be overlooked, for it stands back unobtrusively between shops in Gresham Street. Old tombstones lean over in the shady graveyard through which a flagged path leads to the dingy brick edifice surmounted by a small bell-turret that in its turn is topped by a weather-vane bearing a large "A."

Inside, the style of architecture proclaims it to be a Wren church. It was damaged in the Blitz, but not too badly. Before the war it wore an air of Victorian comfort that was probably due to its carpeted nave and its diminutive size—only 53 feet square. Yet, in spite of these small dimensions, at one time it boasted a gallery and closed pews, which must have reduced its apparent area still further. Four Corinthian columns divide the interior into four compartments that form the arms of a cross, each having an arched ceiling; and these compartments and the semi-panelled walls certainly suggested some formal reception hall. But a high gilded altar-piece, the organ, and good stained glass helped to contradict that impression—and cherubs added



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no weight to either side. It is really a friendly little church, and eminently suitable for the confirmations that used to be held here.

So plain and unassuming is the exterior that one would never guess it to be a church with a history. Yet it has a long and honourable record, and also seems to have been especially connected with trees. As St. Anne de Aldresgate it was mentioned in 1200: later, Stow knew it as St. Anne-in-the-Willows, "so called I know not upon what occasion: but some say of willows growing thereabouts: but now there is no such voyde place for willows to grow more than the Churchyarde, wherein do grow some high Ashe trees." Another church associated with willows was St. Nicholas Olave, its site now covered by Queen Victoria Street. This edifice was also known as St. Nicholas Willows; and as it stood fairly near the river there was probably no lack of willows round about it—but that reason cannot be claimed for St. Anne's.

Although St. Martin-le-Grand, just round the corner, possessed the right of sanctuary, St. Anne's has more than once been used for that purpose. When in 1414 Master John Tibbey, the Queen's Chancellor and Archdeacon of Huntingdon, was killed nearby, his murderers claimed sanctuary at the church, and were afterwards allowed to leave the country. The church has had its share of martyrs, too. As early as 1415 one of its parish priests was burnt at Smithfield for his religious beliefs; and later a vicar, Mr. Love, was beheaded for protesting against the execution of Charles I.

St. Anne's was first damaged by fire in 1548, but a

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few monuments dating from 1499 onwards remained; also a curious old inscription in the form of a puzzle:

Qu	an	Tris	di	c	vul	stra
\	\	\	\	\	\	\
os	guis	ti	ro	um	nere	vit
/	/	/	/	/	/	/
H	san	Chris	mi	T	mu	la

The first and second lines, and second and third lines combine to read as follows:

*Quos anguis tristi diro cum vulnere stravit,  
Hos sanguis Christi miro tum munere lavit.*

The church suffered at the hands of the Puritans; the font was removed and replaced by a basin, the altar was destroyed, its cross broken, and hangings burnt. When the Great Fire came St. Anne's was burnt down, as was also the neighbouring church of St. Agnes, and for four years the people of both parishes had nowhere to worship. This state of things did not suit them at all: they set to work and collected £160, and built a shed in the corner of the ruins of St. Anne's, and there they held their services until the new church of rubbed brick was erected in 1680. That building was described by a historian as standing "in the churchyard with lime trees that flourish there. So that, as it was formerly called St. Anne-in-the-Willows, it may now be named St. Anne-in-the-Limes." Today there are neither willows, ashes nor limes in the graveyard: the little church could only be designated "St. Anne-under-the-Plane."

The parish books show some quaint entries. After the church had been repaired and redecorated in 1726,

one Apollo Harris was engaged to look after the roof for an annual payment of 20s., and we read: "Paid Mr. Harris his Sallary for doeing Nothing to the Church this year ten shillings." There are also records of "Touching for the King's Evil," and of a sermon preached under the fulsome title of "The reasonableness of Repentance, with a dedication to the Devil, and an address to the candidates for hell."

In 1670 the parish of St. Agnes was united to that of St. Anne. Before the Fire there had been so many churches standing practically on each others' toes in this part of the City that some were left out when rebuilding took place. Of St. Anne, St. John Zachary, St. Leonard Foster, St. Mary Staining and St. Olave, Silver Street—all within a stone's throw—the last three were not re-erected; and the parish of St. John Zachary became attached to St. Anne with St. Agnes. Zachary was probably the name of the first priest, to whom the canons of St. Paul's granted the church in the twelfth century; one memorial from his church exists in St. Anne's—a monument to Sir James Drax, a wealthy sugar planter of Barbados in the time of Cromwell. But the church had other possessions. In an inventory of about 1250 it was stated that St. John's owned a silken banner, a painted altar cloth, a breviary, one chalice, two sets of vestments, five veils; later, two tankards were added, and afterwards used at St. Anne's. The site of St. John Zachary is now a cheerful little garden where in summer-time one may sit quietly among hollyhocks, bees and butterflies, and muse on the past.

This spot was not always a peaceful backwater. It must have been a very busy quarter when the

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neighbouring churches pressed closely on one another. Just round the corner, overshadowing them, was the great priory of St. Martin-le-Grand, with plenty of coming and going, and the traders in cheap jewellery plying their business close by. And almost next door to St. Martin's stood the important monastery of the Grey Friars with its great church. Those were lively bustling times for St. Anne and her companions; and now, although St. Agnes was a girl martyr, the three saints seem like three old friends who have come to live together after the excitements of life are over, meaning to spend their declining years in quiet contentment.

After the Fire many more of the destroyed churches were not rebuilt; but they are not lost to us, for their parishes were added to those that survive. Today, if we study notice-boards outside the churches, the old dedications read like some lovely litany. In Lombard Street, for instance, there is St. Edmund the King, with St. Nicholas Acons; All Hallows, Lombard Street; St. Benet, Gracechurch; St. Leonard, Eastcheap; and St. Dionis, Backchurch. We see St. Swithin, London Stone, with St. Mary Bothaw; and a grand string of names follows St. Nicholas Cole Abbey—with St. Nicholas Olave; St. Mary Somerset; St. Mary Mounthaunt; St. Benet Hude; and St. Peter Parva, Paul's Wharf.

But the most heavily burdened church carries eight additional parishes. That is St. Margaret, Lothbury, with

St. Bartholomew by the Exchange,  
St. Christopher-le-Stocks,

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St. Mildred in the Poultry,  
St. Mary, Conyhope Lane,  
St. Martin Pomary,  
St. Olave Jewry,  
St. Stephen, Coleman Street,  
St. Mary Colechurch.

During the reign of Queen Mary (Tudor) an amusing incident took place at St. Anne's. The birth of a prince was expected, and rumours went round that the infant had arrived (though, as a matter of fact, it was never born). In some churches the event was celebrated prematurely by the singing of a *Te Deum*, and the curate at St. Anne's even described the appearance of the child. Waxing eloquent, he told his congregation "how fine, how beautiful, how great a Prince" it was.

St. Anne, the mother of the Virgin Mary, does not seem to have been a popular saint in old London. After the Dissolution few churches were dedicated to her, and those were neither large nor important. At one time a tiny church of St. Anne clung to the wall of the greater Dominican church of the Black Friars, on the bank of the Fleet. It was swept away by the Fire and not rebuilt, but its parish was joined to that of St. Andrew-by-the-Wardrobe. Another "old chappel" of St. Anne existed near the gatehouse of Westminster Abbey in the reign of Henry VIII. St. Anne, Soho, belongs to a later period. It was built in 1686, probably by one of Wren's masons, and was a plain galleried structure. Enemy action damaged it badly, but the tower, erected some time after 1882, still survives.

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How much of the early history of London and its churches we owe to John Stow! Without his patient and painstaking care in compiling a *Survey of London* our knowledge of the City before Elizabeth I's reign would be regrettably scanty. He lived at a specially important time (1545-1605) when mediævalism was passing and modern London was being born; and as he loved what was old and time-honoured he was just able to catch old memories, old customs, and pin them down in writing before they vanished for ever. Nothing was too small to escape his notice, and in the *Survey* he has recorded the history and topography of London from earliest times, its government, sports and pastimes, schools—in fact, everything; even the monuments in all the churches.

Stow was a tailor, and a freeman of the Merchant Taylors' Company; but his antiquarian zeal caused him to give up this work and take to writing and publishing. Other books that he brought out were the *Churches of England* and *Annals of England*. Unfortunately there seems to have been no money in authorship of this kind, and finally he became so poor that in 1604 the King, James I, granted him official permission to become a beggar. Soon after this he died, and was buried in the church of St. Andrew Under-shaft. His bust in a niche there shows him as a bald-headed old man writing in a book, with other books beside him. In his hand he holds a real quill pen, and a pleasing custom exists whereby this pen is renewed each year by the new Lord Mayor of London.

*Old Father Baldpate,  
Say the slow bells of Aldgate*

HUNDREDS of years ago these "slow bells" probably sounded from the Priory of the Holy Trinity and Christchurch which stood just inside the Ald-gate, and which was founded by Matilda, Queen of Henry I, on the site of a previous Saxon church. "Old Father Baldpate" was obviously a gibe at the tonsured Augustinian monks of the priory. From one chronicler we learn that "This church was given to Norman, first canon regular in all England. The said Queen [Matilda] also gave unto the same church, and those who served God therein, the plot of Aldgate, and the soke thereunto belonging," with certain endowments. The priory lands embraced "the parishes of St. Mary Magdalene, St. Michael, St. Katherine, and the Blessed Trinity, which was now made but one parish of the Holy Trinity, and was in old time of the Holy Cross or Holy Rood parish." But the parishioners of St. Katherine could not bear the loss of their church, and soon built another (St. Katherine Cree) for themselves.

As time went on the priory became "a very fair and large church, rich in lands and ornaments, and passed all the priories in the city of London or shire

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of Middlesex." Prosperity smiled upon it; the property of the Cnihten Gild (an ancient body of knights), after it was dissolved, came to the priory, and other possessions were made over to it; the brethren were renowned for their piety and their ceaseless offering of prayer and praise—and also for their magnificent hospitality. But, with institutions as with men, good fortune cannot be relied on to last for ever, and gradually during the fifteenth century the devotion and sanctity of the monks degenerated and the property decreased in value. Some was sold, but decay and debt had set in, and the priory sank downhill as slowly and surely as it had once climbed to the height of well-being. Finally, in 1532, the prior and canons gave up the struggle to keep going, and surrendered the priory and its remaining lands to Henry VIII.

The King gave the site and all its buildings to Sir Thomas Audley, afterwards Lord Chancellor. Audley had a bright idea, and offered the great church just as it stood, and complete with bells, to the parishioners of St. Katherine's, imagining that they would gladly pull-down their own small church and use this large and beautiful one. But they were suspicious of this gift, "having doubts of after-claps," according to Stow; and by their refusal one of the City's finest monastic churches was lost to us. Audley pulled it down, with much expense and labour, and disposed of the bells. (We shall hear of them again in Stepney.) The mansion he gave to his daughter, Margaret, who became the second wife of the Duke of Norfolk; and after his execution for high treason in 1572 it passed to Margaret's son,



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who sold it in 1592 to the Mayor and Corporation of London.

The place where the priory had stood became, in the time of Oliver Cromwell, the Jews' quarter, and remained so for about two hundred years. Today the only vestige remaining of the rich and powerful foundation of the Holy Trinity is a pump at the junction of Leadenhall Street and Fenchurch Street with Aldgate. This spring was once revered as the holy well of St. Michael, and rose in the priory grounds. It is wonderful to think that after the passing of centuries it still refreshes thirsty Londoners as it did the monks of old.

Although the great establishment was destroyed, there remained the parish church of St. Botolph, an ancient foundation dating from about the time of Canute, which had been given to the Priory of Holy Trinity in 1115, and rebuilt by the canons some time after. We have no record of its early bells, but the present church possesses a peal of eight. St. Botolph's Church stood close outside the Ald-gate, for Botolph is the saint of travellers, and, in London, churches dedicated to him were erected at Bishops-gate, Billingsgate, Aldgate and Aldersgate. Thus, whether a traveller was proceeding north, south, east or west, he would have an opportunity of praying to the saint in his own church at the City gate, and asking for protection on his journey.

Boston, in Lincolnshire, is really "Botolph's town": the saint, who was a pious Saxon, built a large monastery there before he died in A.D. 680. Of his London churches three remain; only that standing at Billingsgate was destroyed in the Fire,

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but its parish was united to that of St. Mary-at-Hill, and its name survives in Botolph Lane, which runs from Eastcheap down to the junction of Monument Street and Lower Thames Street. The other churches were all rebuilt during the eighteenth century.

From 1374 to 1385 Geoffrey Chaucer lived over the Ald-gate. The poet was also a mediæval civil servant, and all day long worked at the Customs half a mile away; but in the evening he came home to his rooms over the gateway, to his wife, Philippa, and to his private life, which he has thus described for us:

But of thy verray neighbours  
That dwellest almost at thy dores,  
Thou herest neither that ne this:  
For whan thy labour doon al is,  
And hast ymaad thy rekeninges,  
Instede of reste and newe things  
Thou gost hoom to thy hous anoon,  
And, also domb as any stoon,  
Thou sittest at another boke  
Til fully dasweed is thy loke,  
And livest thus as an hermyte—  
Although thyn abstinence is lyte.

The gatehouse made a pleasant, comfortable home for the poet and his wife. They lived in rooms on the first floor, above the heavy arches of the gateway, where Chaucer was able to keep his library of more than seventy books—an unprecedented number for those days. From their western windows the Chaucers looked out on the jumbled roofs and spires of London; eastwards they saw the rough road to

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Whitechapel, and the fields and woods of Essex. The portcullises of the two gateways were hardly ever let down, but the porter closed the actual gates every night, and opened them in the morning. What a stream of varied traffic must have passed through! Creaking carts and heavy waggons rumbling over the stones; travellers on foot, on horseback, in litters; country yokels driving beasts; knights and fine ladies, beggars, priests and merchants. . . . Can we wonder that the poet, looking down dreamily from his window on this procession, began to see another procession—a cavalcade of pilgrims—going out of the City in a different direction—to Canterbury?

The present church at Aldgate was not designed by Wren, though at first sight one might think so. The former edifice escaped the Fire, but was rebuilt by Dance, the elder, in 1741, and renovated by Bentley, the Roman Catholic architect who built Westminster Cathedral, in the nineteenth century. The interior of St. Botolph's gives a pleasant sense of lightness, which is due partly to the balustrading of the galleries, partly to the white plaster ceiling decorated with rows of life-sized winged figures supporting shields and coats-of-arms of many notable London personages. Galleries existed in the former church, too, and with good reason, for at one time, according to Stow, the congregation "increased so rapidly" that the church was "pestered with lofts and seats for them." Though the balustrading and ceiling help, the chief source of lightness lies in the large windows of clear glass with leading set in interesting patterns. There are none of the cherubs

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and garlands that we find in the Wren churches; everything is plain and dignified.

The pulpit is the most extraordinary piece of furniture in the church. Nobody knows its date, and, considering the Protestant tradition of St. Botolph's, the symbolism of the panels is inexplicable. The designs are inlaid in a lighter wood, and, one to each panel, consist of the Bible surmounted by a bird, the Sacred Heart emitting flames, a chalice with drops of blood falling into it, the sun giving off rays, and a mitre. How came such Catholic emblems here in a Protestant age? Perhaps if we knew the date and history of the pulpit that would supply a clue.

Public confession and penance at the beginning of Lent was quite usual up to the end of the eighteenth century, and in some cases persisted into the nineteenth: at St. Botolph's the practice continued until 1882. The white-robed penitent, holding a taper or wand, stood up in the church where everyone could see him—probably near the pulpit—and confessed his sins before the congregation.

Another curious feature, besides the pulpit, is the coloured window over the altar (which stands at the north end instead of the east). It represents Rubens' "Descent from the Cross," and is a replica of a similar window that was at one time in St. Botolph's Lincolnshire church. It is a pity that the artist is unknown, for he used a most intense and unusual shade of purple in the border of the window.

The lectern will be a precious possession for posterity. Simply carved in the form of an eagle, it is made of oak from the roof of Guildhall, which

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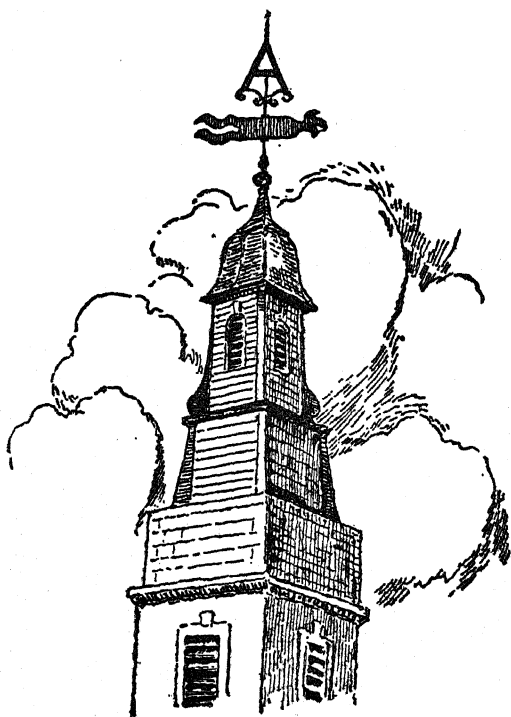
was destroyed by enemy action on December 29th, 1940. Under an elaborate sword-rest is a pathetic tablet to the memory of William Symington, who constructed the first steamboat fitted for practical use: "Dying in want, he was buried in the adjacent churchyard, March 22nd, 1831." There is also a monument on the wall of the gallery, a carved and painted bust, to Robert Dowe, that kind-hearted man whom we shall meet presently at St. Sepulchre's; and a gruesome relic kept locked up in the vestry is the mummified head of the Duke of Suffolk, Lady Jane Grey's father, who, like his daughter, was beheaded as a traitor on Tower Hill in 1554. The Duke and his wife used to worship at the priory church of Holy Trinity, and in 1851 this head was found on the south side of the altar, in a small vault. It was encrusted with oak sawdust from the basket on the scaffold, and one surmise is that Suffolk's widow managed to save it from being exhibited on a pike on London Bridge, and gave it pious burial: the tannin in the oak would act as a preservative.

On the pillars of the gallery in St. Botolph's are affixed lists of priors from 1108 to 1289, and of incumbents from 1302 to the time of Henry VIII: these serve to link the church to the suppressed priory, and bring the distant past closer to us. The centuries are still further telescoped by a notice outside the church, which states as calmly as though it were referring to last week that the parish registers from 1558 may be searched.

The churchyard, lying conveniently just outside a City gate, contained one of the biggest plague-pits, 40 feet long, 15 feet broad and 20 feet deep. It is

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said that it would have been still deeper if the digging had not been stopped by water flowing in. The churchwardens were blamed for making it so large "as if they expected to bury the whole parish in this terrible gulf." But the plague was especially virulent in the Whitechapel district, and during one dreadful fortnight in September 1,114 bodies were cast into the pit.



*Weathervane of St. Anne's, Gresham Street*

*You owe me ten shillings,  
Say the bells of St. Helen's*

So many of the City churches are jammed between other buildings that it gives one a sense of relief to turn off Bishopsgate into St. Helen's Place, and see the blackened double-fronted church with its trees and flowery churchyard set in an open space. St. Helen's, at any rate, has plenty of elbow room.

We go down six broad and shallow steps into a dim interior, and are at once transported into a different age. The noise of Bishopsgate is shut out; the bustle of the City is left behind; we have shed the twentieth century, and find ourselves in the fifteenth. The daylight is subdued and eked out with a few lights; and in this shadowed place we are conscious of a kaleidoscope of colour in the great traceried east window, of a shining golden altarpiece, of more stained-glass windows, of a gracious arcade of vaulting and pillars—and of absolute and utter stillness. The church is waiting—for what? At any moment, we feel, the ghosts of dark nuns might flit across the nave, or Tudor ladies in ruff and farthingale rustle down the aisles; City merchants in furred gowns or jerkined apprentices might push

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open the doors and walk in. They are the people who belong here; this is their atmosphere.

Wherein lies the enchantment of this beautiful old church? Surely in the fact that the essence of the centuries is distilled in this quiet spot. Every period of Gothic architecture is represented here, the Gothic spirit of worship is embodied, and brasses and effigies of Londoners from the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries give a comprehensive portrait of the wealthier families of those times.

But St. Helen's goes back much farther than the fourteenth century—it dates, perhaps, even from Roman times. The dedication of the church is to St. Helen, the mother of the Emperor Constantine. She was the daughter of "Old King Cole" (Coel II, Prince of the Trinobantes), and was born at Colchester. In the Church's history she is remembered as the reputed discoverer of the True Cross at Jerusalem, and at St. Helen's a fragment of the Cross was preserved. The earliest remains ever found on this spot were bits of Roman tessellated pavement, and this has led some people to think that the original church was built by Constantine himself. Of this no one can be sure; but traces of a Saxon church have been found during excavations. The church certainly existed in A.D. 946, for in that year the body of St. Edmund was brought into London for safety and deposited in St. Helen's for three years until the Danish depredations ceased.

About 1210 the canons of St. Paul's gave permission to William Goldsmith, a wealthy London citizen, to found a priory of Benedictine nuns dedicated to the Holy Rood and St. Helen. It was



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closely connected with St. Paul's, naturally, and every prioress had to take an oath of fealty to the Dean and Chapter. They, in return, gave her the parish church for a yearly payment of half a mark. When the priory was founded the church was rebuilt on a grander scale, for a second nave and choir were added on its north side, thus solving the problem of converting a parish church into one suitable for a religious community, while preserving for the parishioners their own church and high altar.

St. Helen's was essentially a London religious house. Most of its benefactors were merchants and citizens of the City, and the nuns were probably recruited from London families. They must have been a jolly community, for we read that when the Dean of St. Paul's came to visit the convent in 1432 he was grieved to observe that the service was hurried through. Furthermore, he had grave suspicions that this ungodly speed was due to a desire to go dancing after the service. He therefore issued an edict which ruled that dancing and revelling were only to take place at Christmas and Easter. In addition, he decreed that the nuns must not look out of the windows; that "the prioress is to give up little dogs and to be content with one or two"; and that the nuns were to abstain from kissing secular persons, "a custom to which they have hitherto been too prone."

With the building of "the nuns' choir" St. Helen's first assumed its present appearance—but of course with minor differences. The two parts of the building were divided by a screen where today an arcade of slender pillars and wide arches stands. On

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the north wall can be seen the doorway (now blocked) that led into the priory buildings on the north of the church, and also the bottom end of the narrow curving stairs down which the nuns used to come from their dormitory to attend the night offices in the choir. We can picture the black-habited figures stealing down these stairs in the cold dark night, and making their way to the stalls by the faint glimmer of candles. Another feature in this wall is a hagioscope, or squint, with no less than six openings affording a view of the high altar, so that those unable to be inside the church could nevertheless see the celebration of the mass. So often these hagioscopes are wrongly called "lepers' " squints. Lepers, in the Middle Ages, were segregated, and might not go abroad for fear of infecting other people: they would not be allowed near a church.

Other architectural details belonging to the thirteenth century are a small lancet window in the north-west angle of the nuns' choir, more lancet windows, now blocked up, and two more "squints" (formerly thought to be aumbries) in the north wall between the choir and a former sacristy.

Among early benefactors to the priory were Thomas Basing, Sheriff of London in 1269-70, and his brother. Adam Francis, Mayor of London, built the two eastern chapels dedicated respectively to the Holy Ghost and the Virgin Mary, and dating from about 1354; and Sir John Crosby, of nearby Crosby Hall, who died in 1475, left 500 marks for the repair of the church and masses for his soul. These repairs included the building of the central arcade and the present lovely timbered roof, as well as

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raising the levels of the floor to suit the raised ground-level outside due to the accumulation of soil during 260 years. The same process has been going on ever since, and that is why today we have to go down several steps into the church.

At the Reformation the nuns' church fortunately survived—probably because it was firmly welded to the parish church, and now became united with it; but the priory itself was dissolved in 1530. The convent buildings became the property of the Worshipful Company of Leathersellers, who used the dormitory as their hall until 1799, when they erected a larger hall, and the remaining ruins of the priory had to be removed to make room for the laying-out of St. Helen's Place. A link with the community was broken when the floor of the church was levelled and repaved about 1890. This work necessitated the removal of 2,000 human remains from the crypt. They were religiously reinterred in the City of London Cemetery at Ilford, and a memorial was erected above them.

In 1631 extensive alterations and repairs were carried out by Inigo Jones, who also planned the large windows in the north wall of the nuns' choir, and designed the beautiful inner door-cases of the west and south entrances. That on the south is enriched with Corinthian pilasters and ornate carving, and bears the inscription, "This is none other than the house of God. This is the gate of Heaven." The altar-piece and Communion rails were probably executed under Inigo Jones's supervision: the pulpit is a little earlier—1620. Carved stalls with tip-up seats, which the nuns used, are now

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choir-stalls; and there are two sword-rests dated 1665 and 1820. The earlier example is unique, being made of wood and consisting of two wreathed pillars supporting an elaborate pediment; it bears the arms of Sir John Lawrence, Lord Mayor during the Plague year, as well as the royal Stuart arms and the City arms. The other sword-rest is of elaborate wrought-iron, and has no less than four coats-of-arms.

Although the Commonwealth brought destruction in its train (one entry records, "paid a carver for defacing the superstitious inscriptions twenty-two shillings"), and although repairs have had to be undertaken periodically, St. Helen's has happily survived two great holocausts—in 1666 and 1941—and remains the most interesting as well as one of the most ancient of the City churches. It is sometimes described as the Westminster Abbey of the City because so many important people are buried here: indeed, it is for their monuments that the church is chiefly known, and a stained-glass window at the west end commemorates the "ten worthies of St. Helen's." Their memorials deserve more than cursory notice, and as we wander slowly and delightedly among them old London comes to life; we meet its worthy citizens, and learn their stories.

On the floor of the little eastern chapels are eight fine memorial brasses whose dates range from 1393 to 1535. When their coverings are rolled back grave portraits of priests, merchants and their wives are disclosed—stiff Gothic figures of great vitality, clothed in mediæval garb.

Sir John Crosby, soldier, diplomatist, captain of

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industry, alderman, built and owned Crosby Hall, that gem of fifteenth-century architecture that stood close to St. Helen's before it was removed to Chelsea. He was buried here in 1475, and his wife afterwards. Their tomb stands in the little chapel of the Holy Ghost, east of the organ, where he lies clad in armour over which his alderman's mantle is cast. So perfectly is this effigy preserved that even the rings on his fingers can be seen.

The most imposing monument is that of Sir William Pickering, our Ambassador to Spain in the reign of Elizabeth I, who died in 1574. A life-sized effigy of this nobleman in ruff and armour lies under a rich marble canopy supported by six Corinthian columns. Martin Bond, who died in 1643, was citizen, haberdasher, and captain of the City Trained Bands at Tilbury. These Trained Bands came into being when the fear of the Spanish Armada was in everybody's mind. They were the equivalent of our modern Home Guard, and Stow tells us that the citizens "voluntarily exercised themselves for the ready use of war. Within two years there were about three hundred merchants and others, very efficient and skilful, to train the common soldiers." Captain Bond is seen seated at a table in his tent, with two sentinels outside, and a man holding his horse. Sir Andrew Judde, Sheriff and Lord Mayor, Citizen and Skinner, who founded Tonbridge School, died in 1558. His monument shows him in armour, kneeling at a desk in company with other figures.

When that eccentric and much-hated man, Francis Bancroft, died in 1727, people rang the bells

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for joy. Before his death he built an enormous tomb for himself, with a doorway, and also ordered a hinged lid for his coffin so that his embalmed body might be inspected periodically by officials of the Drapers' Company (to whom he left a large fortune). This grisly rite was performed until fairly recently, but it became an unpleasant job, and had to be discontinued: the whole tomb was then sunk into the ground.

Here, in a plain altar tomb of Siena marble, lies Sir Thomas Gresham, that famous merchant and diplomat in the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI and Elizabeth I, and founder of the Royal Exchange and Gresham College. He, like Sir Richard Whittington, has been the victim of popular fictitious tales, and we can declare categorically that he was not a foundling baby left in a field and betrayed by the chirping of grasshoppers to a woman passing by, who took him home and brought him up as her own child. Neither did he adopt the grasshopper (seen on the weather-vane of the Royal Exchange) as his crest out of gratitude to the insect: it had figured on the coat-of-arms of his ancestors since the fifteenth century. Equally untrue is the legend of Dick Whittington. Richard belonged to a well-to-do country family in the fifteenth century, and was apprenticed to a mercer in London. All went well with him. He became very rich, married his master's daughter, entertained royalty, and was a great benefactor to the City. He was Mayor of London four times, not three, and only "Mayor": the title of Lord Mayor did not come into use till after his day. It is possible that a cat played some part in the

family fortunes, for this animal seems to have been associated with the Whittingtons: the bas-relief of a boy with a cat in his arms was unearthed from the ruined fifteenth-century home of one of the family.

Gresham's tomb is unfinished, and the inscription has simply been copied from the parish register: "Sir Thomas Gresham, knight, buried Dec. 15th, 1579." However, he had an imposing funeral, being followed to the grave by two hundred poor men and women in black gowns. He prepared this resting place for himself before his death, and, in return for the space it occupied, promised to build a tower or spire for the bells. But unfortunately he did not leave definite enough instructions to his trustees, the Mercers' Company, so nothing was done, and the bells remained hung over the gateway leading from Bishopsgate to Great St. Helen's. Not until 1696, when Sir Christopher Wren was consulted about repairs to the church, was the present bell-turret erected. Three of the four bells were then sold to help pay for the repair of the church, and one, the best, was hung in the new turret to give notice of burials. The present bells, three in number, were cast in 1779-80, and rehung in 1893.

Family monuments can be rather quaint, and a lighter note is struck by the memorial to Alderman John Robinson, who died in 1599. "The glasse of his life held threescore and ten yeares and then ranne out," states the inscription. Kneeling opposite him is his wife who, dying in 1592, "changde her mortall habitation for a heavenly." This couple "spent together 36 yeares in holy Wedlock and were happy besides other worldly things in nyne sonnes and

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seaven daughters"—all duly shown kneeling in two neat ranks. Somewhat similar is the wall memorial to Richard Staper, Alderman, who died in 1608: this is one of the monuments brought from the church of St. Martin Outwich. The worthy alderman was "much blessed in his posterity," and he and his wife kneel facing each other with a bevy of "posterity," ruffed and stomached, behind each.

Resplendent in fresh paint and gilding stands the tomb of Sir John Spencer against the south wall. The knight and his lady lie side by side comfortably while their daughter, small, elderly and worried-looking, kneels alone at their feet, dressed up in ruff, hood, and an extremely wide farthingale. She cannot have been so ill-favoured in real life, for William, Lord Compton (afterwards Earl of Northampton), fell in love with her, and, because her father objected to their marriage, resorted to a ruse. One morning Sir John, coming downstairs, found the baker's boy at the door, and gave him sixpence for being early. But outside the door was the baker's barrow, and presently the boy (Lord Compton in disguise) was trundling away Miss Spencer concealed in the barrow. Sir John was furious, and disinherited his daughter; but some time later Queen Elizabeth asked him to be a godparent with her to the child of a disinherited couple. He could hardly refuse, though unknown to him the baby was his own grandson. And so, by means of the Queen's stratagem, the old man was reconciled to his daughter and her husband.

Sir John's funeral procession in 1609 must have been a sight worth seeing; it was attended by 1,000



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men dressed in black. He was generous as well as rich, for to each of 320 poor men was presented a basket containing "a black gown, four pounds of beef, two loaves of bread, a bottle of wine, a candlestick, a pound of candles, two saucers, two spoons, a black pudding, a pair of gloves, a dozen points, two red herrings, four white herrings, and ten eggs"—a somewhat miscellaneous assortment of gifts, but well-chosen and acceptable to poor men.

Fashions in memorials change, and to the coloured kneeling figures of the Elizabethan age succeed the quaint conceits of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. An early example is found on the monument of Sir Julius Caesar Ademare, or Sir Julius Caesar, as he preferred to be called. Upon the tomb lies the marble representation of a bond, signed and sealed but having the seal broken and dangling by a string in token that the bond was broken by death. The Latin inscription states that Caesar was ready to pay the debt of Nature whenever God required it. Sir Julius, the son of an Italian physician at the Court of Queen Mary, was Judge of the Supreme Court of Admiralty of Queen Elizabeth, and Master of the Rolls to King James I.

A floor-slab in memory of some unnamed children bears this touching inscription:

Silent grave to thee I trust  
These precious piles of lovely dust.  
Keep them safely sacred tomb  
Till a father asks for room.

One is left wondering what tragedy caused their deaths, and what happened to their sorrowing father, as there is no further mention of him.

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It was not until 1874 that St. Martin Outwich, the church of the Worshipful Company of Merchant Taylors, was demolished. The parish was transferred to St. Helen's, twelve of the most interesting monuments were removed there, and the Merchant Taylors became the patrons of the united benefices. The fourteenth-century tomb of Sir John de Oteswich (or Outwich) and his wife can be seen in the chapel of the Holy Ghost, where he and his wife lie together as effigies of alabaster.

A glass case in the church holds a reminder of one who tried to rouse the people of England from the religious apathy into which they had sunk in the eighteenth century. John Wesley preached here twice, and thus recorded the visits in his Journal:

May 9, 1738. I preached at Great St. Helen's to a very numerous congregation on "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" My heart was now so enlarged to declare the love of God to all that were oppressed by the devil, that I did not wonder in the least when I was afterwards told, "Sir, you must preach here no more."

Much water had flowed under bridges before the second entry, years later, and the great missionary was full of thankfulness for the work he had been permitted to do:

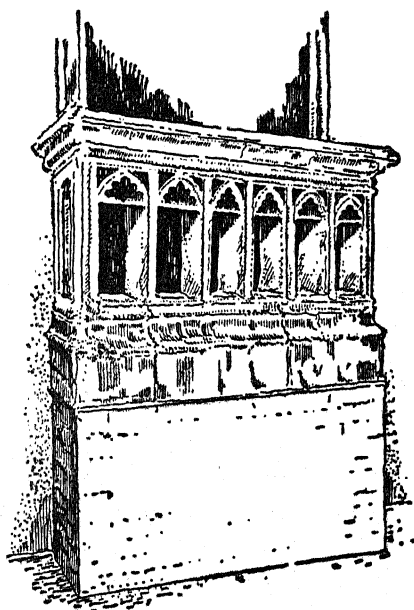
Jan 17, 1790. In the afternoon I preached in Great St. Helen's to a large congregation. It is, I believe, fifty years since I preached there before. What has God wrought since that time!

There is someone who was not buried in the church, but who evidently lived in the parish, as he had to

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pay the 5s. parliamentary tax that was levied, and in 1597 was described as of "St. Ellen's parishe"—William Shakespeare. He would find living in Bishopsgate quite convenient for his work at the Shoreditch theatres, of which we shall read more when we come to the bells of Shoreditch. The connection between St. Helen's and the dramatist prompted an American gentleman to present a Shakespeare memorial window to the church, and this is set in the north wall of the nuns' choir.

Most of the stained glass in the windows is modern, but there are old richly coloured fragments arranged in three of them, two on the north wall, one at the east end of the chapel of the Holy Ghost.



*Sixfold "Squint" in St. Helen's, Bishopsgate*

*When will you pay me?  
Say the bells of Old Bailey*

AND now the gaiety of "Oranges and Lemons" is subdued: a solemn tolling takes the place of care-free ringing. "When will you pay me?" was a pertinent inquiry on the part of these bells, for at one time debtors as well as felons were imprisoned in Newgate. The watch-towers of the City gates were generally used as jails, and Newgate was a public place of confinement as far back as the reign of John: the Old Bailey was only erected in 1770. Appalling conditions prevailed in both places, and punishments were severe out of all proportion, men, women and children being hanged for petty theft. As may be imagined, executions were frequent, and crowds lined the route from Newgate along what is now Holborn and Oxford Street to the gallows at Tyburn. (This spot is marked by a metal plate in the roadway quite close to Marble Arch.)

We can imagine the scene. People squeezed in the windows, laughing and talking, people thronging the road and jostling on the sidewalks, people clambering to get a foothold on any railings or ledges, people everywhere. As the cart containing the condemned prisoners turns out of Newgate Prison a

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wave of excitement runs through the crowds. Howls and execrations are heard, prayers and booing, while the criminals shrink or assume an air of bravado. Above the tumult and the milling throng the great bell of St. Sepulchre's Church almost opposite clangs slowly with deep foreboding notes; it is the Passing bell marking the last moments of life, and invoking prayers for those about to die. When the *cortège* passes the church door a nosegay of flowers is handed up to each victim, probably with a prayer, to sweeten his last hour. The tumbril moves on; but farther on there is another pause in the frightful journey. The cart stops at St. Giles-in-the-Fields, and the criminals are each presented with a great bowl of ale, "to be their last refreshing in this life." And so they go to Tyburn.

The spiritual plight of these unfortunate creatures lay so heavily upon the mind of one Robert Dowe, that in 1605 he bequeathed £50 for a handbell to be rung outside the condemned cell at Newgate on the eve of an execution. It is said that a tunnel (now blocked up) ran underneath the road, connecting the crypt of St. Sepulchre's with Newgate, and that condemned prisoners were brought through it to receive the last sacraments. This is the route the sexton took when he went to stand outside the cell and give "twelve solemn towles with double strokes with a handbell and deliver with a loud and audible voice this exhortation":

All you that in the condemned hole do lie  
Prepare you for tomorrow you shall die:  
Watch all and pray: the hour is drawing near  
That you before the Almighty must appear.

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Examine well yourselves: in time repent  
That you may not to the eternal flames be sent.  
And when St. Sepulchre's bell in the morning tolls,  
The Lord above have mercy on your souls.

PAST TWELVE O'CLOCK.

Only when Newgate was rebuilt in 1783 and acquired its own Passing bell from St. John's, Southwark, did St. Sepulchre's relinquish this melancholy task of tolling for the criminals. The handbell used by the sexton is kept in a glass case in the church; and another relic of Newgate is a charred beam retrieved from the fire caused by the Gordon Riots in 1780.

Tyburn took its name from the Ty-bourne, one of the numerous small streams that fed the Thames. The unhappy memories of the spot date from 1196; and in Elizabeth I's reign the expression "to go west" meant to end one's life there. Is that what we think of today? Or do our thoughts turn to the Blessed Isles of the West, where it was believed the souls of Celtic heroes went after death?

St. Sepulchre's old grey church with its pinnacled tower stands peacefully in the sunshine today as the traffic of Holborn rolls past, and along the south walls are seats where old folk and City workers can rest among the flowers and trees of the narrow churchyard, while above their heads, on the wall, a sundial marks the moving hours. A gap north of the church is the site of the parish watch-house. Here a vigil was kept against body-snatchers, and into the house the watchman could cast any evil-doers he might encounter on his rounds. Passing under the fifteenth-century porch we find ourselves

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in the vestibule, or ante-chapel, of the largest parish church in the City. It is so peaceful that the big clock ticking sedately on the dividing screen sounds obtrusive. And St. Sepulchre's, during its long existence, has seen so much happen, and has undergone so much in the way of repairs and restoration that it must be thankful for its present quiet and stillness.

This church has been described as a watcher at the City's gate for forty reigns—a pretty good record. But actually the time is longer than that; a church stood here in Saxon days. And although its first dedication was to St. Edmund, King and Martyr, as time passed this building and its successor were known by different names—St. Edmond Sepulchre, St. Edmond-without-Newgate, St. Sepultur-without-Newgate, St. Pulchres (either as an abbreviation of "sepulchre" or after St. Pulcherian, who lived in the fifth century), and finally, as now, St. Sepulchre. The dedication to the Holy Sepulchre was probably due to the influence of the Crusades, as was also the name of a neighbouring ancient inn, "The Saracen's Head," mentioned in *Nicholas Nickleby*. A police station now stands on the site, and the terra-cotta panels of the Dickens memorial a few yards away have been destroyed by the Blitz.

The Saxon church was followed by another on the same spot in 1178; and this was given in 1253 to the prior of St. Bartholomew's hard by. Then Sir John Popham, Chancellor of Normandy and Treasurer of the King's Household, rebuilt the church in 1440. According to Stow: "This Church was newly re-edified or builded about the raigne of

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Henry the sixth or of Edward the fourth. One of the Pophams was a great builder there, namely of one fayre Chappell on the south side of the quire, as appeareth by his Armes and Monuments in the glass windows thereof, and also the fayre Porch of the same church towards the south." The arms and glass were destroyed in the Fire, but the "fayre Porch" survives with its lovely fan-vaulted ceiling and seventeen carved bosses of angels, birds, knots, wreaths of foliage and other devices. Above it there are two storeys. The first was a chantry priest's dwelling in mediæval days; the second was used as a schoolroom after the Reformation. One John Gines, a citizen who died in 1592, desired to be buried in "the lower end of the church, at the stayres foot which goeth up to my schoole."

St. Sepulchre's was badly damaged in the Fire. The roof and clerestory were destroyed, the nave completely burnt out, and the church plate melted; but the baptistery, tower and porch were unharmed, and most of the original walls remain to this day. (The church fortunately escaped the Blitz of 1940-41.) After the Fire the parishioners set to work at once to restore their church; but they cannot have been very successful, for in 1667 they called in Sir Christopher Wren, and he carried out certain repairs for them. The roofs, nave and arcade of Perpendicular design were supplanted by semicircular arches with Doric pillars supporting them: the battlemented parapets were not removed until 1790, when, in addition, the Perpendicular windows made way for round-headed ones. Some of these remain in St. Stephen's Chapel; the rest were restored



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to their Perpendicular design in the nineteenth century. Between 1630 and 1634 the tower was rebuilt.

Standing where it does, between Smithfield and Newgate, St. Sepulchre's has witnessed both gaiety and grim tragedy. In the Middle Ages tournaments were held at Smithfield, and Giltspur Street commemorates the knights who rode thither gaily wearing golden spurs. Here the boy-king, Richard II, met Wat Tyler's peasants, and the Mayor of London killed their leader with his dagger. At Newgate there were hangings and quarterings; and for two hundred years the old church looked down on scenes of horror at Smithfield, where first Catholics burned Protestants, and then, the tables being turned, Protestants burned Catholics. Martyrdom was by burning because fire signified complete annihilation of body and soul; it was the final end. The very first Marian martyr was John Rogers, Vicar of St. Sepulchre's in 1553. He became a Protestant, and helped Tyndale with his translation of the Bible. After being imprisoned in Newgate for heresy (he had preached the Reformed doctrine at St. Paul's Cross) Rogers was led out past his church and his wife and eleven children to meet death at the stake. His family joined the procession, and they and the people of Smithfield so encouraged and comforted the martyr with their cries that "it seemed as if he had been led to a wedding," wrote the French Ambassador, Count Noailles.

Inside, St. Sepulchre's is airy and spacious. Once it was disfigured and over-filled by a gallery, but that was removed in 1879, together with the old

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high pews. At the same time the round arches were altered, and the interior restored to its original Gothic design.

The light from the windows illumines the gilding and carving of the organ in the north-west corner. This instrument, once one of the most famous in England, was built by Renatus Harris in 1670, and its ornate case surmounted by winged gold figures was decorated by Grinling Gibbons. It is said that Handel and Mendelssohn played on it. Samuel Wesley used to go to St. Sepulchre's after evensong at St. Paul's in order to hear the organ, which he considered the finest in London; and his famous son, Samuel Sebastian, drew crowds to the church when he played there on Sunday evenings after the service. In more recent times, Sir Henry J. Wood, who did so much for the musical life of London, was organist here in his youth. A stained-glass window to his memory has been placed in St. Stephen's Chapel, and his ashes are interred below it. The musical tradition of St. Sepulchre's is still being carried on by organ recitals during the week.

As we look around we may perhaps ask in perplexity, "But why *two* pulpits?" There they stand, one on either side of the nave, identical in their panels, carved cherubs and swags of flowers and fruit. The explanation is simple. Originally the pulpit was a three-decker, and these are the two upper "decks" neatly separated. There was also an immense sounding board, 12 feet in diameter, consisting of varnished ribs of mahogany radiating from the centre and so forming a reflector; but this cumbersome piece of furniture has been removed. The

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font has a massive black oak cover carved with cherubs and festoons. It was presented to the church in 1670, and is so heavy that it has to be pulled up with a chain and pulley.

Here, as in so many of the churches, is a lovely sword-rest raised high above the pews so that the congregation might observe the symbol of authority. These rests, or sword-cases, came into general use after the Restoration. At first they were made of wood (like the example at St. Helen's), but later of decorative ironwork, painted, gilded, and usually bearing the royal coat-of-arms, the City arms, and those of the Lord Mayor himself. Their intricate and exquisite patterning, touches of bright colour against the gold and black of wrought iron, and fine detail in the heraldic arms make them a fascinating study. All Hallows Barking had the most superb collection, but there are no less than six at St. Mary-at-Hill, and very splendid they are. Their purpose was to hold the Lord Mayor's sword during the service when he attended a church in state with his aldermen and councillors: until the middle of the last century he attended a different City church each Sunday.

The Lord Mayor has four swords, and the sword-bearer who goes before him, bearing the sword, usually wears a gown of black brocaded satin, and always a cap of sable which he keeps on his head on all occasions—even in the presence of the sovereign. The Pearl Sword has a scabbard studded with pearls, and was presented by Queen Elizabeth I when she opened the Royal Exchange in 1571: this is the sword that the Lord Mayor proffers to the Queen at

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Temple Bar whenever her Majesty enters the City, in token of the City's submission to the sovereign. The Sword of State, emblem of the Lord Mayor's authority, is carried with its point down in the presence of the Queen or any of her Majesty's judges, but point upwards before the Lord Mayor on every other occasion: it dates from 1680. The Black Sword goes back to 1534: it is used on Good Friday, on the anniversary of the Great Fire, and at the death of a member of the Royal Family. The Old Bailey Sword, dated 1563, is placed over the Lord Mayor's chair at the Central Criminal Court.

Many of us will remember the romantic story of Captain John Smith, that gallant adventurer, sometime Governor of Virginia and Admiral of New England, who was saved from execution by the Indian princess Pocahontas. He was taken prisoner by Indians in Virginia and condemned to death; but when his head was actually on the block, and the assembled Indians were awaiting the signal for the axe to fall, the young princess rushed forward and knelt beside him, placing her head on his. She refused to move, and at last the Indians consented to spare Smith's life. He died in 1631, and was buried in St. Sepulchre's—but poor Pocahontas, who had fallen in love with him, is buried at Gravesend. She became a Christian, and followed Captain Smith to England; then, hearing a false rumour that he was dead, she married another Englishman. The couple had just boarded a ship to return to Virginia, and were off Gravesend, when she died. There is a painting of her in St. Sepulchre's near to Captain

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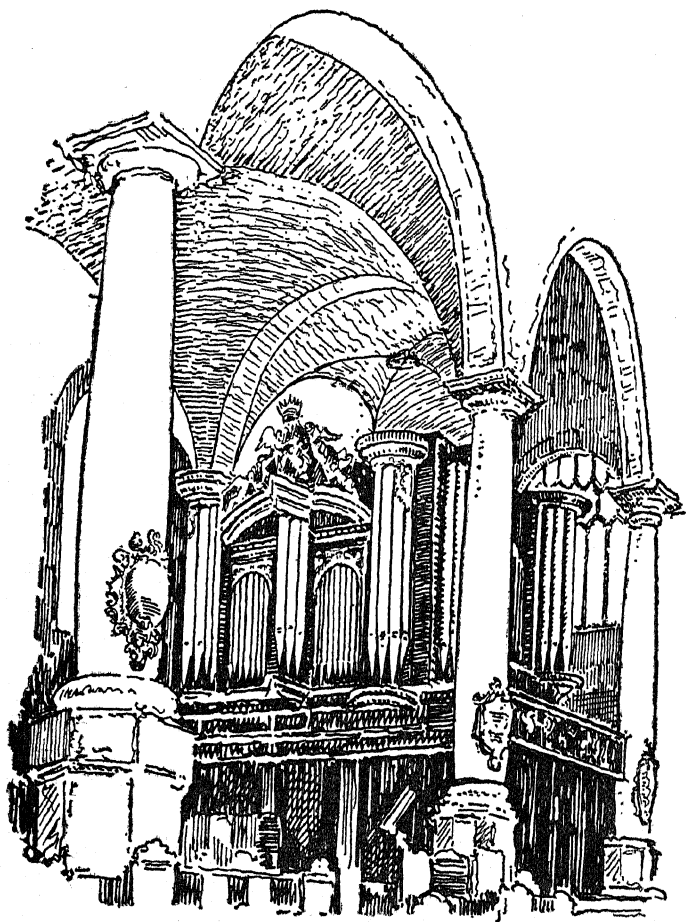
John Smith's brass tablet; and her full story has been told by David Garnett in the novel he has called after her.

In St. Stephen's Chapel lies buried Roger Ascham, though there is no monument to his memory. Author of *The Scholemaster*, and tutor to Elizabeth I and Lady Jane Grey, he was so well-beloved by the Queen that at his death she declared she would rather have lost £10,000 than Ascham.

Old gravestones of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries help to pave the aisles of St. Sepulchre's, and a list of vicars from 1249 serves to remind us of the church's antiquity. The bells, now numbering ten, have a long history quite apart from their connection with Newgate. When St. Bartholomew's Priory was surrendered to Henry VIII in 1539 that church "having in the bell Tower 6 belles in a tune, these bels were sold to the parish of St. Sepulchre's." By 1666 their number had been increased to ten, but these were melted in the Fire. The parishioners did what they could to overcome this calamity by having the bell-metal recovered from the débris and recast. In this way they were able to salvage four bells, but in 1708 these were superseded by "ten tuneable Bells which make a pleasant harmony when rung in peal." There were, in addition, the great tenor bell weighing 3,300 lb., which tolled for the condemned prisoners, and a Sacring bell with the date 1598. In 1829, while the Lord Mayor's procession was passing, and the bells were ringing, the tenor bell fell with a terrific crash. The friction of constant ringing for more than a century and a half had worn out the gudgeon. This and other repairs

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have been necessary during the passage of time, and in 1905, when the bells had been fully restored yet once again, the Ancient Society of College Youths celebrated the occasion by ringing Stedman Caters, consisting of 5,105 changes, in three hours twelve minutes.



*Gilded organ-case in St. Sepulchre's, Holborn*

*When I grow rich,  
Say the bells of Shoreditch*

FROM a distance, when we see it rising above the buildings that encompass it on every hand, there seems to be something oddly familiar about the steeple of St. Leonard's, the parish church of Shoreditch; and a nearer approach shows that it is practically a replica of the steeple at St. Mary-le-Bow, except that it springs from the roof, not the ground as every true steeple should. What a pity that the architect lacked courage or initiative to invent something original of his own! This erection by George Dance, the elder (who was responsible for building the church between 1736 and 1740), just misses the strength and beauty of Wren's steeple.

This edifice, plain and severe but for its steeple and the Doric portico at the top of four broad steps, is the successor of a former church that stood on the site for a very long time. Its earliest mention was in the middle of the twelfth century, when a Bishop of London granted the church of Soredich to the Priory of Holy Trinity at Aldgate. This grant was subsequently revoked, and before 1324 the church was attached to the Archdeaconry of London, to which it still belongs.

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Soredich, Sordig, Shoredich—all were common names for this marshy region. It was drained by open watercourses, and the most obvious derivation of its name is from “sore,” meaning an open sewer, or drain, and “dich,” a ditch. There is certainly no truth in the legend that Shoreditch was called after Jane Shore, the mistress of Edward IV, who, according to a popular ballad, died there in a ditch: the name occurs three hundred years before her time. And the suggestion that the district took its name from the ditch belonging to someone called Sceof or Scorre is too far-fetched to be considered.

In the first instance Shoreditch seems to have been a settlement at the junction of two Roman roads (now Old Street and Kingsland Road). In mediæval times a good deal of the parish was owned by religious houses, the most important being the Augustinian Priory of Holywell, dedicated at first to the Virgin Mary and St. John the Baptist, and later to St. John alone. This establishment was dissolved in 1539, and pensions were granted to the nuns. The buildings survived until 1544; and after that demolition was rapid. But part of the site later became famous for a secular reason. In 1920 a tablet affixed to the front of two houses in Curtain Road bore these words:

The site of this building forms part of what was once the precinct of the Priory of St. John the Baptist, Holywell. Within a few yards stood from 1577 to 1598 the first London Building specially devoted to the performance of plays, and known as THE THEATRE.

We shall meet this again presently.

No record of the mediæval church of Shoreditch



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exists today, but we know that it was built of flint and rubble, that it had three windows at the eastern end, and a square tower of three stages at the western. At the top of the tower was a bell-cote which at first contained five bells. Two chantries were connected with this church, and were served by a mass priest who was paid £7 a year, besides 4s. for his chamber.

Between 1581 and 1630 galleries were added, and in 1700 the church fell into line with the new regulations: on the altar-piece were painted the Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Creed; and Communion table and chancel were enclosed by a balustraded rail. In spite of periodical repairs the old church gradually became unsafe—and no wonder! It had been standing for more than five hundred years. About 1713 a high wind took away part of the steeple, exposing the bells. Then, on December 23rd, 1716, something really alarming happened: "the walls of the old church rent asunder, with a frightful sound, during Divine service, and a considerable quantity of mortar falling, the congregation fled on all sides to the doors, where they severely injured each other by their efforts to escape." That was the climax. Inquiries revealed bad structural conditions as well as an unhealthy state due to the floor being 8 feet below the level of the street. And this in its turn was due to the accumulation of soil that had raised the ground, as at St. Helen's. The crypt of St. Mary-le-Bow is said to have stood on the level of the Chepe at one time; and we know how deeply the remains of Roman London have become buried.

The parishioners of St. Leonard's were told by the

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bishop that they must either repair the church thoroughly or rebuild it. They decided to rebuild; and a temporary "tabernacle" was erected for them in the churchyard until the new church should be ready. It took from 1736 to 1740, and the result is the pleasing building we see in the Wren tradition.

In the entrance lobby are two peal boards. They record remarkable change-ringing by the Royal Society of Cumberland Youths in 1781 (a peal of 12,000 Treble Bob Royal), and by the College Youths (peals of 10,000 and 11,000 Oxford Treble Bob Royal during 1770). Upstairs in the ringing room more peal boards tell of other exploits. But the fame of Shoreditch bells goes back another two centuries. In an old sixteenth-century book entitled *Old London Bridge* it is written: "Now began all over London the ringing of bells; but the bells to hear which crowds upon crowds were seen hurrying, were those of Shoreditch, those bells long maintained their celebrity, and were such great favourites with Queen Elizabeth that she never passed them without making a halt to listen to their music—the people all bareheaded kneeling around her."

St. Leonard's is rightly proud of its present bells (which fortunately escaped damage during the war); their notes are surprisingly sweet and silvery, and well deserve a couplet in "Oranges and Lemons." They number twelve, and were rehung in 1913. All of them bear inscriptions recording their casting or recasting, and in some instances the names of the persons who bore that expense. No. 5 bell has this legend stamped upon it: AT PROPER TIME MY VOICE IL RAISE & SOUND TO MY SUBSCRIBERS

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PRAIS THO. LESTER. Before the war the bells were rung by the Royal Cumberland Youths, who, in fact, had their headquarters here in the days when they called themselves the Companie of the London Schollers of Chepeside. The earliest date for the full peal of twelve was 1784, and from that time the bells were rung regularly until they were silenced for reasons of security.

Inside the church round-headed windows at the sides and in the clerestory give plenty of light. The nave is separated from the aisles by Doric columns from which spring semicircular arches. The ceiling is divided into flat panels, and a fine rood-beam with crucifix and grouped figures spans the chancel where in olden days a rood-loft would have stood: this is a memorial to the men of Shoreditch who fell in the 1914-18 war. Formerly there were galleries on three sides; now only the western or organ gallery remains, with a clock in an elaborate case of Chippendale design. A profusion of carved fruit and flowers, surmounted by an eagle with outspread wings, frames a blue panel wherein the clock is set. The organ, built in 1757, is a fine instrument, and still retains its original keyboard of white-and-black keys in reverse. Its gilded pipes are topped by a crown in the centre and mitres on either side.

The pulpit is panelled, and enriched with carving round its base; the sound-board is supported by two fluted Ionic columns. The font probably dates from 1740, and is cut from a solid block of white marble veined with grey. In the sanctuary stand four royal Jacobean chairs, each bearing the cipher of a crown in its carving. Also Jacobean is the former high

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altar of carved wood, which is to be placed in the Lady Chapel. At the western end of the church are bread cupboards of unusual design. The two drums of the 20th Shoreditch Battalion of the Middlesex Regiment, which were presented to the church after "the war to end all wars," 1914-18, have been saved from damage in the second world war, and now stand in glass-covered cases on the south side. In the crypt are several tombs, the most remarkable being that which bears the name of Hunniades and has curious carving on its sides. During the war the crypt was used as an air-raid shelter, and now this arrangement has been made permanent, with the result that the tombs are walled off.

Our eighteenth-century forebears held decidedly morbid ideas on the subject of death and judgment, and a strange and elaborate monument on the south wall perpetuates the memory of Elizabeth Benson, who died in 1720 in her ninetieth year. It shows two grisly skeletons personifying Death pulling down the Tree of Life, and the inscription tells us that "Death with heavy foot stole on her and the threads of her life were not spent to the full but snapped." One can only surmise that the old lady had determined to become a centenarian, and felt aggrieved at being cut down at a mere ninety years.

Then there is the Draper memorial tablet at the south-west end of the church under the gallery. Susanna Draper was only twenty-eight when she died in 1775, and one wonders what she could have done to deserve such an epitaph. But below the "poem" is inscribed the name of Martha Draper,

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who died in 1779 at the age of sixty-nine, and perhaps the brunt of the awful warning was hurled at her. The epitaph is rather long, and the second half runs:

Thou poor pale piece  
Of outcast Earth in Darkness! What a Change  
From Yesterday! HARK! What Voice is this  
Which in hoarse Accents murmurs from Her Tomb?  
INSTANT. "*Prepare to meet thy God! Fly from  
The Wrath to come!*" Ere irrevocable  
Thy dreadful doom by Death be fix'd in Woe  
Unutterable!

St. Leonard's escaped the Blitz on the City, and then was hit by the very last flying bomb in 1944. For some time the interior remained smothered in dust; the organ and the clock were damaged, but happily they have been repaired. A window of Flemish glass, dated 1654, has vanished, and so has the Shakespeare window which was brought here from St. James's, Curtain Road. It had been placed there to commemorate Shakespeare's arrival in London, and represented the Seven Ages of Man, from *As You Like It*. Though the window has gone, the dramatist's friends are remembered here. On the north wall is fixed a grey marble tablet in memory of the Elizabethan actors who were buried in the former church—James Burbage and his sons, Cuthbert and Richard (the tragedian), William Somers (Henry VIII's court jester who appears in the Hampton Court picture of the King and his family), Richard Tarlton (foremost comic actor of his time), Gabriel Spencer, William Sly and Richard Cowley. This memorial was erected by the Shakespeare League

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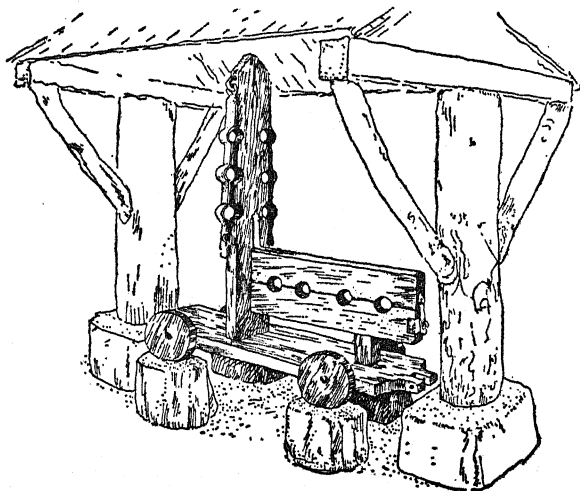
"in acknowledgement of the work done by the players, musicians, and other men of the theatre." It recalls the time (1586) when William Shakespeare, a young man of twenty-two, came up to London to seek work.

Shoreditch was a great resort of actors in Elizabethan days, for the only theatres in London, The Theatre and the Curtain, were there, and belonged to James Burbage. Here the youthful Shakespeare found employment, at first in a humble capacity—some say holding the horses of patrons outside the door. But soon he found himself inside the theatre, first as call-boy, then as an actor in the Lord Chamberlain's company of players; and here he met Richard Burbage, one of his life-long friends, and later to become the great interpreter of his tragic roles. Not much is known of the plays staged at the two theatres; but *Romeo and Juliet* was produced in Shoreditch, Ben Jonson acted here, and it is almost certain that *Every Man in His Humour* was produced at one of the theatres. Then James Burbage died in 1597, and the next year The Theatre was taken down, and its material used for building the Globe Theatre on Bankside, which was chiefly devoted to the production of Shakespeare's plays. But it was Shoreditch that gave him his first chance.

In a little park not far from the church rests Thomas Fairchild, who by his will in 1728 bequeathed a sum of money in order that annually on Whit-Tuesday a sermon might be preached on either of two subjects—*The Wonderful Works of God in the Creation*, or *On the Certainty of the Resurrection of the Dead proved by certain changes of the Animal and*

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*Vegetable Parts of the Creation.* This bequest was duly fulfilled, and continued at any rate well into the present century. The President and Fellows of the Royal Society always came to hear the discourse, and a critical audience they must have been.



*The old Stocks at Shoreditch*

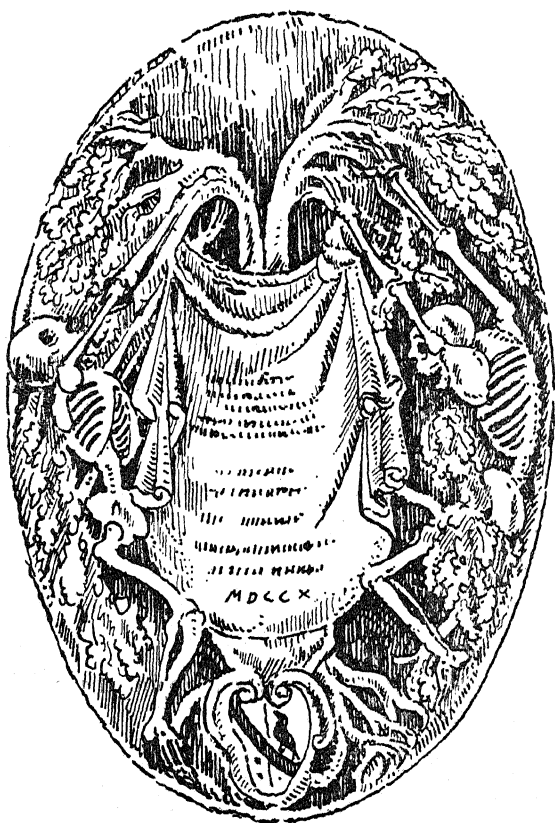
The old stocks and whipping-post can be seen in the churchyard, carefully sheltered under a little roof of thatch. These were for the punishment of vagabonds and beggars, and an entry in the documents of one City church reads:

1601—Paid to Andrews for whipping the vagrants for one whole year 5s. 4d.

Here, too, is a tombstone inscribed, "1807 John Gardner's Last and Best Bedroom." Gardner was a doctor who sold wormcakes, and he had his tomb prepared before he was ready to inhabit it. Finding

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that his business suffered because of the inscription—for who was going to consult a doctor who was about to die, if not already dead?—he had the word “intended” put in; and then when he actually retired to his “Bedroom” it was deleted. The tomb looks large enough for a family vault, but we are assured that the gentleman sleeps alone.



*Memorial to Elizabeth Benson, St. Leonard's, Shoreditch*



*Pray when will that be?  
Say the bells of Stepney*

AT St. Dunstan's, Stepney, we can imagine ourselves back in pre-Reformation times. The old grey church with its machicolated walls and squat grey tower is the oldest building in East London, and belongs, like St. Giles, Cripplegate, to the period when churches were not only places of worship but places of defence where people might take refuge in times of fighting. The church stands in an oasis of plane trees and graveyard in the midst of a badly blitzed area; and although rockets during the latter part of the war blew out the glass from the windows and smashed some of the pews, the stout and ancient fabric remained undamaged, and its interior unspoil.

Towards the end of the last century a fire destroyed the roof, organ-case and vestries, but was powerless to destroy the atmosphere of the church. Standing here among tributes of devotion past and present, one has the feeling that St. Dunstan's has been used and loved by its parishioners through the centuries; it is a "live" church. The present structure was rebuilt in the middle of the fifteenth century; but its foundation and the original dedication

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(which was to All Saints) go back to A.D. 953, and the parishioners celebrated the thousandth anniversary of their church in 1953.

St. Dunstan was, of course, an Englishman, and one of the greatest archbishops of Canterbury; he is buried in the sanctuary of that cathedral. He practically ruled this country from A.D. 950 to 978, during the reigns of Edgar and his son, Edward; and the ceremonial which he devised for the coronation of King Edgar has been largely used ever since. This great priest was also a fine craftsman, and when he reformed the monasteries he made it a rule that every monk should learn a craft. He himself was a metal-worker and jeweller as well as a musician and artist; and there is a legend that while he was Abbot of Glastonbury he was working in his forge one night when the devil appeared and tempted him to "down tools" and enjoy himself instead. Whereupon Dunstan picked up his red-hot pincers and nipped his Satanic Majesty's nose with them so that he fled away screaming. This incident is commemorated above the door of St. Dunstan's by a carved spandrel in a design of pincers-cum-devil. The corresponding spandrel shows a fully-rigged sailing ship.

Stepney, where the saint's church was built, was in early times known as Stebbon Heath, or Stebenhithe, the latter word meaning either "Stephen's haven" or "timber haven." The same derivation is found in Queenhithe and Garlickhithe, and stresses the fact of Stepney's proximity to the river. We can picture the little village, and its guardian church with the square tower, set between the flat shores of the Thames on one hand and the Hackney

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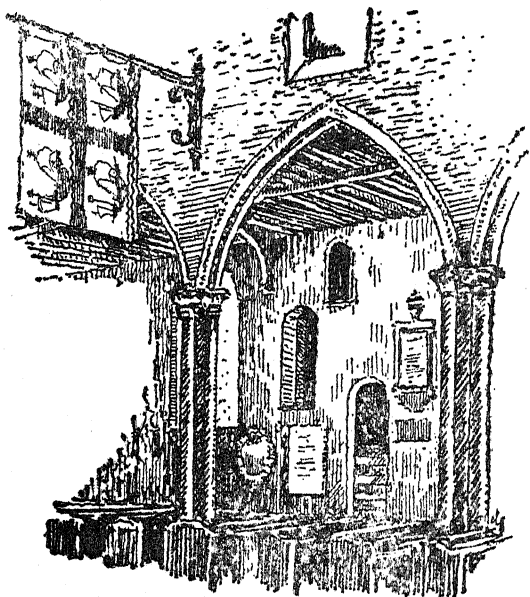
marshes on the other. To the west lay Whitechapel, another village on the ill-kept way to the Aldgate, and so to the City. London is made up of scattered villages like these that have gradually spread and coagulated to form the shapeless sprawling mass of the metropolis, and it may well be that contests such as Lady Gomme refers to were frequent between these various parishes. St. Dunstan was the mother church of this part of Essex, and had an enormous parish that embraced Whitechapel, Spitalfields, Bethnal Green, Limehouse, Shadwell and Wapping.

St. Dunstan's is a delightful church to wander in and make discoveries, for it has held on to and preserved something from every age. In appearance the spacious interior with its walls of rough undressed stone, its wide arches and slender clustered pillars, is Perpendicular, and the windows replaced in the aisles and clerestory follow their original Late Decorated and Perpendicular designs. The nave has a barrel roof of dark oak set with golden bosses (which has been partly restored); and wood or stone corbels, mostly carved into the semblance of winged figures holding shields, adorn the beam-ends in the nave and south aisle. Except that it now lacks a rood-screen, this is the style of church in which our forefathers were worshipping at the time of the Dissolution and up to the Fire. But there are Roman bricks built into the fabric of the tower, and they point to the antiquity of Stepney, if not of the original church.

The big square font is Norman: each side has carvings of a different pattern, and Norman *motifs* are recognisable. The sedilia are Early English;

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and—to go back architecturally—one of the most precious things in the church is a rood panel of stone, with a crucifix and the figures of the Virgin and St. John, now set above the high altar. This dates from



*Staircase opening in St. Dunstan's, Stepney*

about 1000, and we should note the representations of the sun and moon on either side of the cross's head and the shape of the cross itself—conventions of the ninth to eleventh centuries. A curious little bit of sculpture over the vestry door belonged to the former church, and represents the Annunciation: it dates from the fourteenth century.

Once there was a rood screen that crossed the church between the fifth and sixth bays; and over

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one of the northern arcades is the upper door that led into the rood-loft. Below, set in a pillar, is an extra large "squint" which afforded a very good view of the high altar for those whose vision was blocked by the column. Let into the south wall is a stone reputed to have been brought from Carthage. Near to it part of a steep stone staircase can be seen inside the wall. This has three door-sized openings into the church; one at the base, brick-bordered like the door of the rood-loft, another half-way up, and a third, rather smaller, still higher up. When this last was explored a rose-window of inferior glass was revealed behind it. This stairway is said by some authorities to have led up through its turret to the rood-loft; others declare that it was the way to the turret on the tower where a beacon was lit to guide travellers through the lonely countryside, and ships going up and down the river. The Thames bends northwards here, and before its waters were controlled and narrowed, and houses and streets covered the ground between, St. Dunstan's flaming light would be clearly seen.

This brings us to an interesting fact. Until a few years before the war every infant born at sea automatically became a parishioner of Stepney. The custom may have arisen at the time when there was a colony of old retired sea-captains living here: seafaring associations have been pretty strong, and probably go back to the days of the "timber haven"; in fact, St. Dunstan's other name is "The Church of the High Seas." Innumerable master-mariners are buried in the churchyard; and in the church lies Sir Thomas Spert, the founder of Trinity House,

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who died in 1541. He commanded the ship which took Henry VIII to the Field of the Cloth of Gold. Admiral Sir John Leake (1656-1720), the reliever of Londonderry, is buried here, and so is Joseph Somes, who "by the sedulous application of a powerful mind raised himself to the position of the most extensive ship owner in this commercial country." His wall-monument has a fine relief of sailing ships. In the nave hang yet other reminders of Stepney's seafaring connections—the flag of Trinity House, the white ensign of the Royal Navy, the flag of the sea cadets, and a frayed flag that has a brass plate beneath it with this inscription: "To the glory of God and in honour of the officers and men who served under command of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Tovey in the sinking of the Bismarck 23-27 May 1941. This flag flown by Lord Tovey during the action was placed by him in the Church of the High Seas for safe keeping 1946."

Other famous people beside seafarers rest within the church. A canopied tomb in the chancel is that of Sir Henry Colet (died 1510), father of John Colet who founded St. Paul's School, and lived at Stepney while he was Dean of St. Paul's. Sir Henry was twice Lord Mayor of London, and his tomb is still cared for by the Worshipful Company of Mercers, to which he belonged. Another Livery Company, the Vintners, hold a service here every June to commemorate one of their number, Benjamin Kenton (died 1800), whose memorial—a high relief between pillars of the Good Samaritan paying for the care of the wayfarer—stands at the south-east corner of the sanctuary. Kenton left £63,500 to charity

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schools and £30,000 to his friends; and the boys and girls from the Vintners' schools join the Worshipful Company at the annual memorial service.

Richard Pace, Secretary of State and Ambassador, was buried here in 1532; Alexander Nevill's monument goes back to 1606; and Robert Clarke, wearing a black cloak, and his daughter Frances in a high starched collar of Stuart period, kneel piously under a canopy of faded gold, facing each other across a *prie-dieu* with the date, 1616, beneath them.

St. Dunstan's is unlike some churches inasmuch as it does not rely on ancient monuments alone for its interest; it is creating memorials of the present day to hand down to posterity. The new high altar and the western gallery have been built out of old pews belonging to the church. Two former porches have been converted into small oratories; one is the children's chapel, the other holds a life-sized Calvary. Three new windows are very beautiful indeed. They are by Hugh Easton, who designed the Royal Air Force window in Henry VII's chapel at Westminster Abbey, and are symbolic of our own times. The eastern window shows Christ on the cross—not a suffering Figure but a Conqueror—a vigorous golden-haired young man wearing the rich red mantle of victory. His cross is green—the colour of rebirth—and it is lifted above the ruins of war-shattered Stepney with gasometers in the distance; it rises from St. Dunstan's immediately below it. What an inspiration this must be to all who worship in the church! The Sailors' window, dedicated "in thanksgiving to the men of the sea, 1939-1945," is at the eastern end of the north aisle,

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and depicts an actual scene—a sailor kneeling in prayer before a crucifix on a dockside: there is just a glimpse of blue water beyond the dock and its capstan.

The window in the Lady Chapel is perhaps the most moving in conception: the little Jesus toddles across the carpenter's shop to His Mother's outstretched arms. The floor is littered with shavings, there is a carpenter's bench under the wide window; and through the window one sees the landscape of Palestine with mountains, streams and cypress trees. The whole lovely domestic picture is enclosed in a great wreath of roses.

Tombs and memorials are outstanding features of St. Dunstan's, and a prow round the churchyard gives rewarding results. Richard Steele, writing in *The Spectator*, said:

I have made a discovery of a churchyard in which I believe you might spend an afternoon with great pleasure to yourself and to the public. It belongs to the church of Stebon Heath, commonly called Stepney. Whether or no it be that the people of that parish have particular genius for an epitaph, or that there be some poet among them who undertakes that work by the great I cannot tell; but there are more remarkable inscriptions in that place than in any other I have met with.

Here lies Betsy Harris, "who died suddenly while contemplating the beauties of the moon" in 1831. Roger Crab, an extraordinary personality of the seventeenth century, is interred here, though his tomb has disappeared. He would have thriven in the post-war days of austerity, for his diet was bran, dock leaves, grass and water, and he seems to have



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lived a long time on it. A little verse of tripping metre runs:

Whoever treadeth on this stone  
I pray you tread most neatly  
For underneath the same doth lie  
Your honest friend Will Wheatley.

Brief and to the point is the epitaph, "Here lies the body of David Saul, Spitalfield weaver, and that is all"; and from a monument on the north wall of the church, Tudor in style but undated, issues a desperate cry: "This life is a warfare. Come Lord Jesus come quickly."

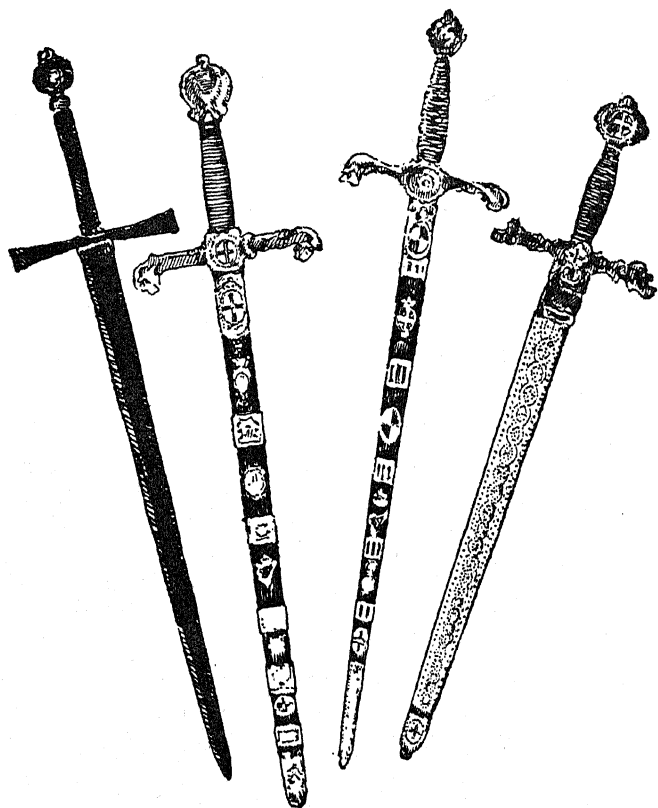
A plague pit in the churchyard can be identified by a slight depression in the ground; and one sad fact is that it holds the bodies of a hundred grave-diggers of the Plague days as well as the thousands of victims they helped to bury. The parish records go back to this dreadful time.

"The bells of Stepney" are a fine peal of ten. They are rung by local ringers, not by either of the old societies, and are worthy of their place in the rhyme. Amongst their number is one given in 1386 to the Priory of Holy Trinity in Aldgate, and sold to St. Dunstan's in 1540. Stow, writing of the "surrender and suppression" of the priory, records that "Sir Thomas Audley offered the great Church of this Priorie, with a ring of nine Bels well tuned, whereof foure the greatest were since solde to the parish of Stebunhith, and the five lesser to the parishioners of Saint Stephen in Colman Street. . . ."

Henry, it will be remembered, gave the priory to Sir Thomas Audley, "newly knighted, and

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afterwards made Lord Chancellor." Audley pulled down the church and steeple, and the sale of the bells may have taken some time to complete, hence the discrepancy in dates. But what happened to the other three that should have gone to Stepney? If only the bells could speak, and tell us!



*The Lord Mayor's Four Swords : from left to right, Black, State, Justice, Pearl*

*I'm sure I don't know,  
Says the great bell of Bow*

ONE of the loveliest structures in the City is the steeple of St. Mary-le-Bow. The church was burnt out in the Blitz of 1941, and the bells completely destroyed; but the steeple, a masterpiece of Wren's creation, still rises in elegance above the prosaic shops and offices of Cheapside, colonnade upon airy colonnade diminishing to the slim spire crowned by a golden dragon-vane. Portland stone lends itself to changing effects, and it would be difficult to say when the belfry looks most beautiful. Against the pale cold blue of a winter sky, sunshine gives it an appearance of carved ivory; in fitful stormy weather it might be a study in black and white and grey chalk; fog makes it grey and ethereal; and at twilight it becomes pearly and mystical. But always it is perfect and satisfying.

Where shall we begin to talk about this famous church which has been such an integral part of London's life? History presses close upon us, stories and incidents jostle each other. Perhaps it will be simplest to begin at the beginning.

The first church on this site was built in the reign of William the Conqueror: it stood on marshy

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land not very far from the wide and sluggish river, and so was supported on arches. To these it owed its names of St. Maria de Arcubus, St. Mary of the Arches, St. Mary-le-Bow: the same kind of nomenclature can be noted in Stratford-le-Bow, where the bridge was built with arches of stone. The vaulted arches of the church, which were then above the ground, are now well below street level, and form the crypt which is all that remains of the early building.

The Norman vaulting also gave its name to the Court of Arches, the Archbishop of Canterbury's chief ecclesiastical court which from 1172 until the bombing of 1941 was held regularly in the crypt or the church. At this Court all the newly appointed bishops in the Province of Canterbury take their oaths before being enthroned in their own cathedrals. Another interesting fact about St. Mary's is that it is one of the Archbishop's "Peculiar," which means that it does not come under the jurisdiction of the diocese of London, but is ruled directly from Canterbury. The Archbishop has thirteen Peculiar among the City churches. The patronage, too, of St. Mary's is unusual, for the Archbishop of Canterbury nominates two rectors in succession, and then the Worshipful Company of Grocers name the third.

Except for the arches little is known about the architecture of this first church until we come to mention of a steeple presently. But it had a most eventful history. Stow says: "For divers accidents happening there, it hath been more famous than any other parish church of the whole City or suburbs." During a "tempest of wind" in 1091 the roof was lifted off bodily and four people were killed. Figures

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of saints in niches were hurled to the earth, and rafters 26 feet long were flung into the street and buried 24 feet deep in the ground. From this we can deduce the marshy condition of Cheapside at that time. The same year or the next, "at the hour of six a dreadful whirlwind from the south-east coming from Africa, blew upon the City, and overwhelmed upwards of 600 houses and several churches, greatly damaged the town and tore away the roof and part of the wall of St. Mary-le-Bow. The water in the Thames rose with such rapidity that London Bridge was swept away." In 1271 the steeple fell down "and slue many people, men and women." In 1284 one Lawrence Duckett hanged himself (or was hanged) in the steeple; whereupon the church was interdicted for two years, and the doors and windows "stopped up with thorns."

That was surely misfortune enough to be going on with; but in Edward III's reign an accident of a different kind occurred. Tournaments and joustings were often held in the open space of the Chepe where normally the booths of traders stood. On one occasion the nobility and knights were taking part in a three-day tournament, and a wooden scaffold like a tower was erected across the street as a grandstand for Queen Philippa and her ladies. Suddenly the erection gave way, and the lady spectators were precipitated on to the knights below, hurting them considerably. The King was furious, and ordered the careless carpenters to be hanged; but the Queen pleaded with him to such good effect ("thereby gaining the love of the people") that his Majesty was pacified, and the wretched men were pardoned.

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But the King straightway gave orders for a stone building or pavilion, the "Crownside," to be erected on the north side of the church, from which royalty and their guests might watch the jousting in safety and comfort. (When Wren rebuilt St. Mary's he remembered the Crownside, and although there was no longer any need for such a vantage point he commemorated it by setting over the porch that little jutting balcony on the north side of the present tower.)

After the fall of the old steeple the City folk subscribed for a new one which was "by little and little re-edified" and finally completed in 1512. It must have been a graceful and lovely structure when it rose in pale Caen stone above the huddled low-pitched roofs of Cheapside. Four open-work turrets or lanterns stood one at each corner with flying buttresses arched over them making an open crown, and another central turret on top. All five were glazed, and were meant to be used as beacons or lighthouses-on-land; and this steeple was Wren's source of inspiration for the spire of St. Dunstan's-in-the-East.

Bow bells were first mentioned in 1469, when an order was made for the ringing of the curfew at nine o'clock each evening. Shortly after this John Donne, a Mercer, bequeathed certain property for the maintenance of Bow Bell and its nine o'clock ringing; and a tailor, William Copland, who was churchwarden in 1515-16, gave the great bell to complete the ring of five. (This must have been a successor to the first great bell.) Sadly enough, it was first rung at Copland's funeral. The nine

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o'clock bell was important, for not only did it mark the curfew but the end of the apprentices' working day. At one time the ringer was evidently unpunctual, and the lively youths wrote this rhyme and fastened it to the church door:

Clarke of the Bow bell with the yellow lockes,  
For thy late ringing thy head shall have knockes.

To which the good-humoured official made reply:

Children of Cheape, hold you all still,  
For you shall have the Bow bell rung at your will.

At this time Bow Church dominated the life of the City although there were six other churches in Cheapside. It stood in the market place of old London, and was the centre of more than buying and selling. Regulations governed the hours of work and sale of goods; and a whipping-post and pillory stood ready for any tradesman giving short weight or selling shoddy goods. Clustered around were streets given up to the various trades—Bread Street, Hosier Lane, Cordwainer Street, Poultry, Cornhill, Honey Lane, Milk Street, Wood Street, Ironmonger Lane, Old Change where the money-changers did their business, Friday Street, the thoroughfare of the fishmongers. The Cheap itself was a lively place lined with shops and sheds, and with much business going on, scufflings and scraps between apprentices, traders bawling their wares, free fights, meetings, horses clattering on the stones and striking sparks therefrom. And above all this din and bustling activity the great bell of Bow rang daily at twelve o'clock and at nine, for the midday meal and closing time, and at many other times for many other reasons.

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Small wonder that anyone born within the sound of Bow bells, in the very heart of London's City, was privileged to call himself a Cockney—a term that goes back to 1521.

The citizens of mediæval London dearly loved pomp and pageantry, and the large open space on the north of Bow Church provided an admirable setting for joustings, processions and other shows. One of the most splendid annual occasions was the setting of the watch at the Midsummer festivals of St. John the Baptist and St. Peter and St. Paul. On the vigils of these feasts there were bonfires in the streets, and the wealthier inhabitants would set out tables laden with food and drink before their doors, and invite the neighbours to partake. It was a time of goodwill when quarrels were made up and feuds forgotten. The decorations were charming, "every man's door being shadowed with greene Birch, long fennel, Saint John's wort, Orpin, white Lillies, and such like, garnished upon with Garlands of beautiful flowers, had also Lampes of glass, with oyle burning in them all the night, some hung out braunches of yron curiously wrought, contayning hundreds of Lampes light at once, which made a goodly shew. . . ."

Then on the festival days half the watch kept guard in the streets while the other half passed through in the marching watch. This was a wonderful procession. It was lit by a thousand cressets, or torches, and included about two thousand men—soldiers, drummers, pipers, trumpeters; standard bearers, lancers, gunners, archers in white carrying their bows and arrows, pike men and bill men.



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There were morris dancers, constables in scarlet and gold, and the waits of the City. The Lord Mayor rode on horseback with a redoubtable train—his sword-bearer and his henchmen before him, his guard in parti-coloured jackets, footmen and torch-bearers, giants, and three pageants which were probably set scenes like those in the Lord Mayor's procession today.

Each of the sheriffs had a similar though smaller retinue, with giants, two pageants, a morris dance, a henchman, and officers in parti-coloured clothes. Remembering the rich and elaborate costumes of those days, it must have been a gorgeous spectacle, and we cannot be surprised that royalty thought it worth while to go down to the Cheap for such entertainment. It is related that on St. John's Eve, 1510, Henry VIII, who had a childish fondness for disguise, dressed himself as a Yeoman of the Guard and stole down secretly to watch the fun. Evidently he approved of it, for the next night he and the Queen (Katherine of Aragon) came with the nobles and ladies of the Court, and so enjoyed the pageantry that they stayed till morning. Alas, in 1539 Henry realised the extravagance of the marching watch, and forbade it. Attempts made to revive the processions in later years were never really successful, and so a brightly coloured scrap of mediæval life faded away.

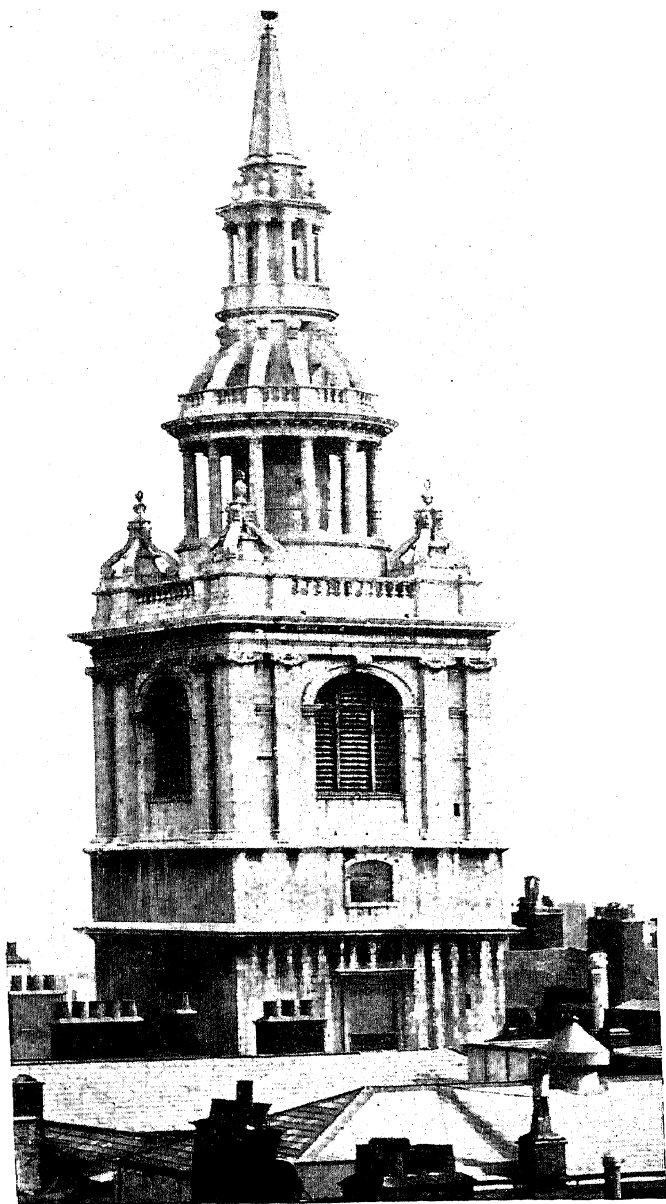
In 1666 came the Great Fire. It raged most fiercely along Cheapside, and the only part of Bow Church that survived intact was the crypt. When in 1671 Wren began to rebuild the church he discovered ancient foundations that he believed were

## *Oranges and Lemons*

the walls and pavement of a Roman temple, and on these he built his church. He decided to bring the tower and steeple 40 feet forward from their former position to the line of the road, and in order to do this he bought the site of an old house. When the workmen had dug through 18 feet of earth they came upon "a *Roman* causeway of rough Stone, close and well rammed with *Roman* Brick and Rubbish at the bottom, for a Foundation, and all closely cemented. This *Causeway* was four Feet thick. Underneath this *Causeway* lay the natural Clay, over which that part of the City stands . . . He (Wren) concluded then to lay the Foundation of the Tower upon the very *Roman Causeway*, as most proper to bear what he had design'd, a weighty and lofty Structure."\* Wren believed this causeway to have been at some time the northern boundary of Roman London.

The plan of the church was designed after the Temple of Peace at Rome, and it cost £15,500—more than any of Wren's other churches. The red-brick building, now laid waste, was almost square, being 65 feet by 64 feet, and consisted of two aisles separated from the nave by Corinthian columns. A spacious vestibule connected the tower and its 7 foot-thick walls with the north aisle, and the interior of the church was rather poor and disappointing. Originally Wren had wished to erect at one end a piazza of two bays surmounted by an open balcony and statues, but this design was never carried out. The plans, however, drawn by Hawksmoor, Wren's

\* *Parentalia*, by Wren's grandson.



*The Steeple of St. Mary-le-Bow*



## *Oranges and Lemons*

pupil and clerk, are now in the King's Library of the British Museum.

Inside the gutted building cherubs still adorn the keystones of the arches. Thomas Cartwright, Mason, was paid "ffor carving 7 Cherubins heads at XV<sup>s</sup> each . . . £5. 5. 0.," and his work has survived even a Blitz. The arched ceiling divided into panels no longer exists; Bow Church is open to the sky. The altar-piece and its paintings have been destroyed, and so have the font and the famous bells. Only the pulpit with its monogram, "C.C." for Charles II and his Queen, Catherine of Braganza, has been saved. Until the war a sermon was preached here annually in commemoration of the Gunpowder Plot—at first on November 5th, but later on the Sunday nearest the day. Money was left to pay the parson and the clerk on these occasions by Theophilus Royley, who died in 1655.

The glory of the church is, of course, its perfect Renaissance steeple. It has been described as the most beautiful example in the classic style in the world, and Vanburgh declared that if Wren's reputation as an architect had depended on this single structure his fame would have been secure. It soars to a height of 225 feet, and is only surpassed among the City spires by St. Bride's, which is 226 feet high. Bow's steeple cost £7,383—almost half the total cost of the church. The staircase in the tower, like that at St. Bride's, is interesting, for the plan on which it is based was derived from the study of shells and their structure.

Apropos of the gilded weather-vane, which is a dragon, a supporter of the City arms in an unfamiliar

## *Oranges and Lemons*

attitude—volant instead of rampant—there is an entry in Wren's account book which states:

To Edward Pierce, mason, for carving of a wooden dragon for ye Vane of copper upon ye top of ye Steeple, and for cutting a relive in board to be profered up to discern the right bignesse, the sum of £4.

Another item reads:

To Robert Bird, Copper Smith, for work done by him . . . about and in ye Neck Ball and Dragon, Sept. 25, 1679. £60. 13. 9.

(This included £30 for making the dragon.)

The vane is more than 8 feet long, and was hoisted into place in 1679. In 1820 it had to be cleaned, and a young Irishman rode on its back as it was gradually lowered, and by dint of constantly pushing it out from the walls and scaffolding managed to bring it to the ground undamaged. Needless to say, this operation was watched by an immense crowd of people in Cheapside and the near-by streets. A prophecy once foretold that if ever the dragon (on Bow Church) and the grasshopper (on the Royal Exchange) met, something important would happen in England. It so transpired that they were lying together in the repairer's yard when the Reform Bill was passed in 1832.

Bow bells have been famous ever since the Great Bell regulated the life of the City folk. Before 1666 there was a ring of six, and although the legend that they encouraged Dick Whittington is untrue, they did play the "Whittington tune" which was named after him. These bells perished in the Fire. Sir Christopher Wren intended his new belfry to hold twelve, but only eight were hung in 1680; and

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towards the cost of these (and the rebuilding of the church) Dame Dyonis Williams, of Norfolk, a benefactress to the City churches, gave £2,000. After that the bells were constantly renewed and added to: in 1762 a peal of ten was rung for the first time on George III's twenty-fifth birthday, and in 1881 the number was at last increased to twelve. Since then there have been further renewals, and when the tenor bell was recast in 1933 each member of the representative gathering present threw a coin into the molten metal, and prayer was offered.

The bells have always been rung by the Ancient Society of College Youths, and in 1907 they rang a memorable touch—5,088 changes of Triple Bob Maximus in four hours and one minute. It must have been a shattering performance for the ringers, each of whom had to pull once in every three seconds. And no less shattering for passers-by and workers anywhere near Cheapside, whose ears were assailed by the continuing pandemonium of roaring, clashing, jangling bells for what must have seemed an endless time.

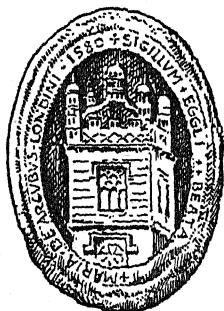
The whole peal was destroyed by enemy action: those famous bells will never be heard again. And yet . . . We thought that we were dreaming or that a miracle had happened on a Lord Mayor's Day after the war. While the procession was passing through the City Bow bells suddenly began to ring, the notes spilling out joyously on the air. All along Cheapside and beyond we could hear the tumultuous music overhead. Hastening to the church we looked in: all we could see were two men and a table in the empty space under the tower. But the men had a

## *Oranges and Lemons*

gramophone, records and an amplifier, and they were playing the bell-music "to welcome the Lord Mayor when he arrives at the Mansion House"—as Bow bells had always done.

If the bells themselves have vanished they have left their voices with us. Those who listened to the B.B.C. interval signal during the war years will remember their beautiful tone. We have seen how bells have played their part in our history, and never was this truer than during the war: in those days of awful strain there was comfort and reassurance when one switched on the radio and the bell-music came tumbling through, sweet and clear. Especially after bad raids, one's own or other people's. London was still standing, the B.B.C. was still functioning, and here were Bow bells telling us all was well, and bidding us keep up our courage. It didn't matter that their chimes were only recorded: they were our own Bow bells in the heart of the Empire speaking to us.

Let us hope that soon again there may be bells ringing in the steeple of St. Mary's. Bow bells are a symbol of London and all that London stands for.



*Seal of St. Mary-le-Bow showing the old tower*



## *Epilogue*

19

*. . . to light you to bed*

WE have wandered through the City in the company of "Oranges and Lemons," peeping into churches of all periods, noting their treasures, listening to their bells and their stories: we have wandered in and out of the centuries and mixed with folk of high degree and low. And at the end of our excursions we discover that the past is not dead and gone, but is incorporated in the present.

Neither burning nor bombs can destroy the spirit of the past: if we look and listen we can find it even in the busiest part of the City. It lives on in the narrow crooked lanes that bear the names of Clement, Nicholas, Martin and other saints: we met it in the churches, and it endures in churchyards almost as small as pocket-handkerchiefs. To the searcher any patch of greenery or even a single plane tree will provide a clue that helps to re-create old London.

Turning down a narrow by-way we suddenly come upon a small plot containing two spreading fig trees and an elder bush. This is all that remains of St. Pancras, Soper Lane; and next door but one is an equally small plot which was the site of St. Benet

## *Oranges and Lemons*

Sherehog. These tiny gardens lie in wait for one everywhere.

Processions and litanies still go on. The Middle Ages came to life one hot summer day when suddenly we beheld issuing from the doors of a church a bright procession. Two by two they walked, clergy in robes and coloured hoods, followed by men in long furred gowns, students, boys and girls. Each carried a prim bouquet of flowers—gay marigolds and cornflowers in a white holder—that recalled the days when nosegays were sniffed to overcome the unpleasant odours in the streets. It was a most surprising vision to burst upon twentieth-century eyes in the heart of the City; but the explanation was simple. One of the Livery Companies, following the tradition of centuries, had just held their annual Corpus Christi service in the church; and boys and girls chosen from their schools had come up for the occasion.

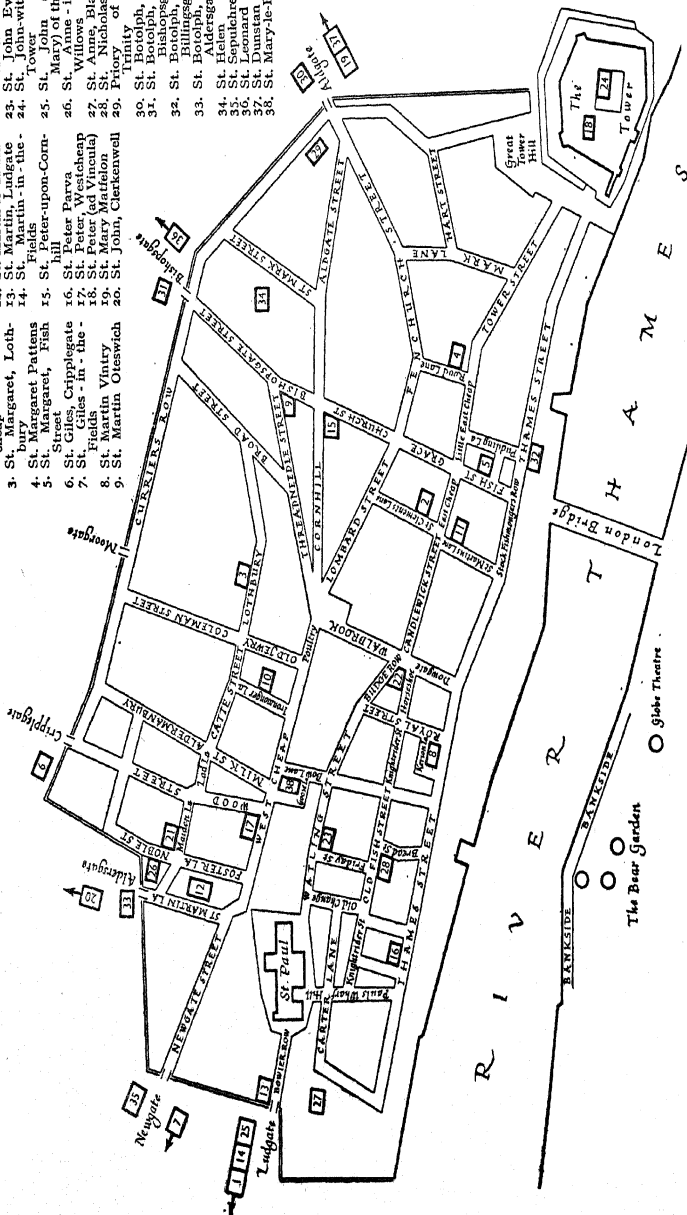
That is only a single example of the unexpected bits of the past that may confront us at any time. We may still join in the Litany at midday in an old church. At midday, too, the sound of the Angelus, rung in some belfry, floats high over the noisy streets; and before the service, in a certain church, the verger sits in a chair beneath the belfry and pulls the ropes of his three bells irregularly, in no set order, just as his predecessors did long, long ago. Old customs linger, old sites and buildings abound: wherever we roam in that enchanted square mile which is the City there is this sense of the past mingling with the present. And London's river, gliding by silently, timelessly, emphasises this feeling.

## *Oranges and Lemons*

What of the days to come? History does not stand still; inexorably it moves onward. What the future holds we cannot tell; but the City and its churches are being rebuilt, and as the story "of London town" unfolds still further, "the merry bells" will ring out and play their part in events as they have done through the ages.

# MAP OF THE CHURCHES

1. St. Clement Danes
2. St. Clement, East-cheap
3. St. Margaret, Loth-bury
4. St. Margaret Pattens
5. St. Margaret, Fish Street
6. St. Giles, Cripplegate
7. St. Giles - in - the - Fields
8. St. Martin Vintry
9. St. Martin Oteswich
10. St. Martin Pomary
11. St. Martin Orgar
12. St. Martin-le-Grand
13. St. Martin, Ludgate
14. St. Martin - in - the - Field
15. St. Peter-upon-Corn-hill
16. St. Peter Parva
17. St. Peter, Westcheap
18. St. Peter (ad Vincula)
19. St. Mary Matfelon
20. St. John, Clerkenwell
21. St. John Zachary
22. St. John-upon-Walbrook
23. St. John Evangelist
24. St. John-within-the-Door
25. St. John (or St. Mary) of the Savoy
26. St. Anne - in - the - Willows
27. St. Anne, Blackfriars
28. St. Nicholas Olave
29. Priory of Holy Trinity
30. St. Botolph, Aldgate
31. St. Botolph,
32. St. Botolph,
33. St. Botolph,
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35. St. Botolph,
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37. St. Dunstan
38. St. Mary-le-Bow



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